Survival of the System 1910-1960:

How a Blend of Factors Contributed to the Survival of the Hollywood Studio System

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts by Research

York St John University

School of the Arts

October 2022

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is their own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the works of others.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank both York St John University and the staff of the Media Production course for helping me throughout my whole time as a student at the university. I would like to extend my gratitude towards Dr Steve Rawle and Dr Wayne Johnson, who have both provided me with excellent feedback for my thesis throughout the year and suggested various pieces of research that have informed my work greatly.

I would also like to thank my parents, who have constantly supported my ambitions throughout my life and have helped to steer me in the right directions when needed while always acting as a source of inspiration.

Finally, I would like to give my upmost thanks to everyone else who has supported me throughout my time at university, of which there are too many to name. No matter how much help was given, it has all been a tremendous support that I will always be thankful for.

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the time period of America between 1910 and 1960 in order to identify how the major Hollywood studios were able to utilise new developments in technology and different business strategies to keep the Hollywood Studio System alive. This thesis explores the hierarchy of the studios, with a focus on Paramount's business practices, the standardisation of sound in cinema, the advancements in colour filmmaking and how films such as *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939) used this to attract audiences, the ethics of the Hollywood Star System and the appeal of film genre. These concepts were chosen as they demonstrate the ways that the major studios used the assets and ideas that they had to keep their position secure.

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Introduction

Since the beginning of Hollywood, the American film industry has been effectively dominated by large companies, who, with their large influence, are able to exert a large degree of control over the state of the film industry. However, the amount of control modern-day companies can exert is significantly less compared to the early half of the 20th century, in which the major Hollywood studios managed a much greater portion of the film industry and as a result, were able to guide the film industry in a way that would benefit them much more. It was through this that the majors installed a de-facto oligopoly within the American film industry, in which the eight studios were able use practices, some later deemed illegal, in order to keep their position at the top of the industry's hierarchy stable.

The goal of this thesis is to determine how exactly a combination of factors contributed to the survival of the Hollywood Studio System during this time period. How the studios operated internally is key to the investigation, as it helps to determine why the eight major studios were the ones in control, compared to other studios at the time, as the business practices that they utilised not only helped them position themselves at the top of the industry, but also ensured that competing studios would find it difficult. Also, a core element towards the research was how the advancements in technology impacted the film industry. With new developments in sound and colour filmmaking, it provided a new asset that could be utilised by the Hollywood studios to further widen the gap between the majors and the smaller studios who did not have the financial means to adopt such technological processes. Furthermore, the relationship between the majors and the actors that they had under contract was also a fundamental part of the Hollywood Studio System, in that the lives of the stars, in a similar vein to modern times, could be used to promote their films. However, the degree of

control in which the studios had in the private lives of the stars calls into further question the ethics of the Hollywood Studio System. Finally, the ways in which the Hollywood studios would mass produce films of certain genres in order to match the consciousness of the average Americans was a practice put in place by the studios to incentivise audiences to their productions and increase their annual profits, keeping their position at the top as stable as possible. The time range of 1910 to 1960 was chosen for this investigation as it can provide the chapters and conclusion with greater context, demonstrating how the Hollywood Studio System was able to establish itself in post-World War One America and how others factors, such as the Paramount Decree of 1948 and the rising popularity of television, led to the transition from the studio system to an American film industry closer to the modern day's idea.

The research for this thesis was conducted through sampling pre-existing works and synthesising the information and arguments in order to come to a better understanding of the methods employed by the studios. Over the decades, there has been a large amount of research undertaken concerning the Golden Age of Hollywood, as historians and researchers have investigated the development of film as a medium, how certain aspects have evolved over the time period and what this meant for the film industry and the outside world. As a result, the pre-existing research has been extremely beneficial to the research as it has helped to provide greater knowledge on the film industry and its success during this period.

The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960 (Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson, 1994) was an extremely helpful pre-existing work as Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson all have respected backgrounds in film history and their work is supported by an extensive range of sources, ranging from books, articles and academic journals. The

methodology employed by the three authors of looking at how the practices of Hollywood influenced the development of the American film industry was fundamental to this thesis, as it provided greater context to some of the business practices used by the studios and what exactly the effect of this was, showing how this benefitted the majors and how it negatively affected smaller studios in Hollywood. Furthermore, the research for the thesis was further influenced by the information provided by Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson concerning how American films and their styles were influenced by the financial situations of the studios. This was not only beneficial towards researching how the studio system operated, but also to how the developments in technology placed certain studios in a financial position where they could afford to produce films of genres, such as musicals, and develop styles that were specific to that studio, e.g., RKO and musicals within the 1930's. Their research also further informed the relationships between each of the major studios and how they were able to cooperate due to the fact that, with their different stylistic conventions, their individual productions could not be seen as competition but instead as supporting the exhibition chains owned by the other studios. This idea has been corroborated by other notable works, such as Richard Maltby's *Hollywood Cinema* (2003) and further elaborated upon in Bordwell & Thompson's later work, *Film History: An Introduction* (2009).

While *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960* has been an invaluable piece of research towards the thesis, it lacks information regarding the audience's reactions to the films and developments of the time, aside from mentions of how productions performed financially. Responses to films and technological advancements are limited to others within the film industry, critics and film historians. While this has also proved to be beneficial towards getting an estimation of the reception these changes and

productions received, it also meant that further research in how the audiences reacted was needed to get a better understanding on the subject.

Another key piece of research towards the thesis was David A. Cook's *A History of Narrative Film* (1996), which has proven to be extremely helpful towards providing further information on the development of the film industries across the world. The information provided by Cook has been supported through various references and statistics to research conducted by other film historians with prior knowledge. The work synthesised by Cook has helped inform the thesis on how the development of colour and sound technology was able to benefit the studios. Cook's main argument is that the films released throughout history can be seen as a microcosm of what the narrative formed was defined as during the time of their release and that, as a result of this, film such as *Citizen Kane* (Welles, 1942) and *Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein, 1925) are considered great due to their defiance of the traditional narrative forms of the time. This argument, and the supporting research provided by Cook, has greatly informed the thesis in that is has helped to provide context regarding the success of studio productions that challenged the conventional medium of cinema, e.g., *The Jazz Singer* (Crosland, 1927) and *The Ten Commandments* (DeMille, 1923) and showing how the success of these productions would incentivise the studios to develop films that were also different from those prior, making cinema evolve in the process.

Similar to the work done by Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson, *A History of Narrative Film* does not discuss in great detail the audience responses to certain developments and the reactions to films usually being limited to the success of the film from a financial and critical standpoint. Furthermore, Cook's approach involved disregarding animated features, documentaries and avant-garde productions. While the latter two are technically irrelevant

towards the research, animation was a significant factor in the history of Technicolor, with Walt Disney Productions' *Flowers and Trees* (Gillett, 1932) and *Three Little Pigs* (Gillett, 1933) utilising the new three-strip process and proving to be extremely popular, acting as an inventive towards the studios to adopt the process. The success of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Hand, 1937) was also extremely influential for Hollywood and by neglecting to explore its impact, *A History of Narrative Film* is affected negatively by not delving into the influence that it had. As the thesis not only explores the use of Technicolor in early Hollywood but also the origins of the music genre, it became clear that other works would need to be used in order to get a more complete idea of early Hollywood and be able to provide a more accurate answer to the research question.

A work that also provided key information vital to the thesis was Jon Lewis's *American Film: A History* (2008). In contrast to the two prior works mentioned, Lewis focuses solely on the development of cinema in the United States, which has resulted in greater attention to detail and discussion of certain aspects that were either overlooked or briefly mentioned by the previous sources. As a result, the knowledge gained from *American Film: A History* has been extremely beneficial towards the thesis, as it has provided more specific information and more context towards some of the changes that were occurring during the Golden Age of Hollywood. Lewis also discusses how the star system of Hollywood operated, which gave more issue into how the system worked and how it was able to benefit the studios.

The information provided by Lewis regarding the advancements of technology, such as sound and colour, was useful towards making it clearer the impact that these developments had in regard to the Hollywood Studio System. The balance between the cultural significance of films and filmmakers with the business side of the industry has also been able to provide the

thesis with a greater idea of what success entailed for the film industry and in what ways it was measured. Furthermore, while Lewis's focus is on the history of American films, he does provide the context of foreign influences on the American film industry when applicable, which has been helpful when it comes to how world events affected the films being produced at the time, such as the influence of World War Two on the Western genre. As a result, Lewis's work has provided several key pieces of information and viewpoints that relate to various chapters of the thesis.

Richard Maltby's *Hollywood Cinema* (2003) has also helped to contribute parts to the thesis, with a focus on American cinema that is synthesised from research done by many other well-regarded film historians, Maltby's work is very detailed when it comes to the history of the American film industry and also delves, albeit not in great detail, the reactions of the audiences towards certain films and developments, an area that had been lacking in the prior works researched for the thesis. Providing information regarding the viewing habits of audiences and how the culture of American society at the time of a film's release could affect the reception was extremely useful as it also provided more context to some of the studio's releases. However, the insight into audience's reception is not extended to Maltby's work on genre, where, aside from discussing the audience's familiarity with conventions and iconography specific to a genre (p.100), the discussion of genre more relates to the conventions it presents and the idea of it being an opposing stance to auteurism, which was not relevant to the thesis's chapter on genre as it focused more on the culture's views on specific genres.

However, the detail that Maltby goes into, when it comes to other areas, also benefitted the thesis by elaborating more on the business practices used by the studios and what the effects

of that were, similar to the aforementioned *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960.* However, as Maltby's work has taken pre-existing research and compounded it into one work, he has provided other pieces of information relating to these business practices that were not mentioned by Bordwell, Staiger or Thompson. Additionally, Maltby, in a similar fashion to Lewis, explores how foreign influences impacted the American film industry, although Maltby focuses more on how foreign films and film movements impacted Hollywood, unlike Lewis who explores the influence of foreign film and foreign events.

Another key piece of research was *Film History: An Introduction* (Bordwell & Thompson, 2009), which, similar to *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*, covers the advancements and progress made within the cinematic medium. The chapters that concern the American film industry in the early 20th century was extremely useful, as it provided a large amount of detail, with their research into the operations of the Hollywood Studio System being extremely beneficial towards the thesis, showing how the studios were able to initially situate themselves at the top of the American film industry hierarchy. Furthermore, *Film History: An Introduction* was able to further develop the idea presented in Bordwell & Thompson's earlier work, of the studios working as a cooperating force that was able to prevent competition through this collaboration.

Similar to their earlier work, Bordwell & Thompson do not go into detail concerning the responses of audiences, which is noticeable when the two are discussing the studio's attempts at concepts such as 3-D and Cinerama, however they do go into greater detail when it comes to how the involvement of individual studios would affect their films in various ways, such as marketing, narrative and structure. Together, *Film History: An Introduction* and *The*

Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960, have been fundamental towards the research for the thesis as they have provided key information regarding how the studio system functioned and how it important it was to ensuring that the Fordist nature of the American film industry performed as smooth as possible throughout the production, distribution and exhibition stages.

A further piece of important research was the biography, *Get Happy: The Life of Judy Garland* (Clarke, 2000) in that it provided great detail concerning the role that the star system had in the Hollywood Studio System. While its focus rests on the titular Garland, it also explains the ways in which studios, or in this case Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, would use methods, that are considered in modern times as either unethical or illegal, to ensure that the reputations of their stars remained consistent with the images that they had crafted for them. While *Get Happy: The Life of Judy Garland* was mainly relevant towards prompting further research into the practices involved with the star system, it did also provided additional information in regards to *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939) and the involvement that Technicolor had in its box office gross, which is itself a core part of the thesis. While Clarke's work does not contain a lot of information that is relevant towards the investigation due to its nature, the information it does provide was crucial, especially as it is supported by references to well-regarded film historians.

Finally, Tim Wu's *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires* (2010) was instrumental towards the information regarding the operations of the Hollywood Studio System by expanding on the pre-existing research to further bring understanding to the rise of Paramount under Adolph Zukor's leadership. While other sources have provided information regarding the origins of the major film studios, Wu's use of Paramount as a case study is able

to provide a greater frame of reference regarding how these business practices were put in use to bring the studio up to the top of the American film industry's hierarchy and to keep it secure throughout the Golden Age of Hollywood. The demonstration of processes and practices, such as vertical integration or block booking, with one studio used as an example was able to effectively illustrate the negative impacts that they had upon the wider film industry. In a similar vein to *Get Happy: The Life of Judy Garland*, Wu's work is, due to its nature, limited to discussing its core subject. However, the information it provided regarding the industry practices and effects was instrumental in inspiring further research regarding the subject and it helped to create a timeline of the origins of Paramount, which proved useful in demonstrating how the studios were able to use the practices to quickly advance up the film industry.

Overall, while many other sources from various mediums were researched to provide this thesis with as balanced and accurate an answer as possible, the ones listed above were instrumental in providing the investigation a key starting point and providing various other academic sources that could be used to assist in the research. They helped to develop the foundation of the research and proved to be extremely beneficial towards the thesis's research greatly by introducing concepts and ideas that helped to prompt further exploration into the specific subjects mentioned by these works. By researching more than just these sources, the thesis was provided with greater historical context towards how exactly the Hollywood Studio System was able to operate unchallenged for such a long stretch of time. The works mentioned all helped in the research of the core topics of the thesis, either through the discussion of the development of technologies used within the film industry, such as the development of colour filmmaking or the advancements in sound-on-film technology, how

the audiences responded financially to the high output of certain film genres and the ethicality of the studios relationship with the actors and actresses of the time period.

Using the sources listed above and more, the aim of this thesis is to synthesise the research provided and examine the ways in which the Hollywood majors were able to utilise different tactics and technologies to prevent any competition from disrupting their position at the top of the American film industry. By inspecting various elements that were involved during this period, the desire for this thesis is to come to a balanced conclusion regarding how a blend of factors contributed to the survival of the Hollywood Studio System between the years 1910 and 1960.

The Operations of the Hollywood Studio System

Throughout the Golden Age of Hollywood, the production of films changed dramatically. Colour was, after many attempts, standardised within the American film industry, audio technology was revolutionised to accompany a film's visuals and new genres were formed to accommodate the evolving medium and the demands of the audiences. However, one of the key developments that occurred was in the American film industry itself, with the formation of the majors and the creation of the Hollywood Studio System, a system that would define American cinema throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

The Hollywood Studio System operated as a de-facto oligopoly, where eight studios dominated the market and their respective shares of the market allowed them a large degree of control on the American film industry. The eight major studios were divided into two groups, known as the Big Five and the Little Three. The Big Five were comprised of Warner Brothers, RKO, Fox, MGM and Paramount, while the Little Three consisted Universal, United Artists and Columbia (Gomery, 1986, p.2). There are a few factors that prevented one of the Little Three studios from being regarded as one of the former group, but the most significant one was that for a studio to be considered a part of the Big Five, it had to be a vertically integrated studio, which is when a studio has full control over the production, distribution and exhibition of films. Vertical integration was a significant part in the Hollywood Studio System as it gave the studios the means to exert their control over the film industry, which was able to help them secure their position above the other studios.

Paramount was one of the first major studios in Hollywood, as it first started to become formed in 1912 when Adolph Zukor founded the Famous Players Film Company, after

successfully distributing the French production *Queen Elizabeth* (Desfontaines & Mercanton, 1912) in order to produce more features. Zukor's aim for Famous Players was to appeal to a larger audience by using recognisable stars (Wu, 2010, p.63), an idea that would persist with Paramount for the remainder of the Golden Age of Hollywood. W.W. Hodkinson, who had brought together 11 local distributors to form Paramount in 1914, began distributing the features of the Famous Players Film Company, which he was also doing for the Jesse L. Lasky Feature Play Company (Bordwell & Thompson, 2009, p.56). W.W. Hodkinson opposed vertical integration, in which the production, distribution and exhibition of films were combined into a single unified body whereas Zukor desired vertical integration, in order to have more control of the business (Wu, 2010, p.89). Adolph Zukor and Jesse Lasky merged their companies together to become the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation (New York Times, 1916) and, having bought a majority of Hodkinson's partner's shares, was able to kick Hodkinson out of the presidency on the 13th July 1916 (Wu, 2010, p.90). The company would continue to use the name Famous Players-Lasky Corporation until April 1930, where it would become the Paramount Publix Corporation (New York Times, 1930) and five years later it would be renamed again to Paramount Pictures (New York Times, 1935).

Zukor, now in control of both production and distribution, also had stars such as Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks under contract, which allowed him to begin utilising a process called block booking, in which potential exhibitors could not acquire the potentially high box office features unless they also acquired the other features on the studio's program, even if the other features were not worth purchasing due to their low chances of performing well at the box office (Koszarski, 1990, pp.71-72). As the two named stars were big draws to the box office, the films starring them could then be used as leverage to make theatres buy the

whole program. As stated by Wu, “To get Mary, you had to buy the block” (2010, p.81). Some features that were mandatory for exhibitors to acquire may not have even been produced at this point, resulting in a process called blind bidding (Schatz, 1998, p.39), in which the exhibitors would have to take a chance on the productions, hoping that they would be of good quality. These two processes were resisted by a group of exhibitors, led by Thomas L. Tally and J.D. Williams in 1917, who grouped together to finance and distribute their own independent features. Naming themselves the First National Exhibitors Circuit, they were soon competing against Zukor and Famous Players-Lasky, and other major studios of the time, by supplying films to theatres nationwide (Bordwell & Thompson, 2009, p,56), to “find means of repressing Zukor before he could acquire dictatorial power.” (MacCann, 1987, p.162). Soon after their formation, First National demanded that block booking and blind bidding be stopped, placing a boycott on Famous Players-Lasky in an attempt to get their goal achieved. The next year, First National also announced that they had acquired Charlie Chaplin, who at this point was a big name in American film, and Mary Pickford, who they were able to take from Famous Players-Lasky, each star receiving a million-dollar contract with creative freedom for the films they appeared in (Wu, 2010, p.92). In response to these aggressive moves against his company, Zukor began purchasing theatre chains for the studio, with the most significant being the purchase of Balaban & Katz Corporation in 1926, a newly formed but extensive theatre chain. These theatres were then incorporated into a subsidiary of Famous Players-Lasky, named the Publix Theatre Corporation, in order to avoid accusations of creating a monopoly from the Federal Trade Commission (Dick, 2001, p.13), who were already investigating the major studios for their block booking practices (Koszarksi, 1990, p.72).

By purchasing theatres and thus having their own exhibition chain, Famous Players-Lasky was now a vertically integrated studio, controlling the production, distribution and exhibition of their films, giving Paramount the "dictatorial power" (MacCann, 1987, p.162) in the film industry that First National had been concerned about. Soon, more studios followed in the footsteps of Paramount by becoming vertically integrated, such as Loew's theatres which acquired Louis B. Mayer productions, Metro Pictures Corporation and Goldwyn Production, the Fox Film Corporation (Bordwell & Thompson, 2009, p.56) and Warner Bros., which would not expand greatly until the 1920's with their development of sound technology (Schatz, 1998, p.63). By the early 1920's, most of the studios that made up the Hollywood Studio System had been formed. In order to stay ahead of their competitors, the studios increased their output, with total investment in the industry increasing from $78 million in 1922 to $850 million in 1930. Most of this spending was put towards the increase in purchasing and construction of theatres (Bordwell & Thompson, 2009, p.129). By having their own theatres coupled with utilising processes such as block booking and blind bidding for the theatres that were not owned by them, studios such as Famous Players-Lasky were guaranteed to have venues that would screen their films. The increase in the number of theatres in the United States also meant that more of the population had easier access to see any of the features produced, resulting in an increased revenue stream for the studios which resulted in more money to spend on theatres, production and marketing, resulting in a pattern that allowed the majors to continue building the degree of influence they had in the American film industry and thus securing their position further. By 1930, an estimated 65% of the United States population were, on average, attending the cinema weekly (Cowden, 2015) and between 1933 to 1934, 95% of film rentals were from the eight majors (Gomery, 1986, p.12)

The studios divided the United States into thirty markets, which were then further broken down into zones. The theatres within these zones were either classed as first-run, second-run or subsequent-run and films would move to the successive zone after 14 to 42 days. This system was developed to maximise the revenue from each release, especially due to the fact that, by 1945, the Big Five owned 15% of the 18,000 theatres in the United States, with most of that percent being first run theatres located in large American cities (Balio, 1985, pp. 254 – 255). First-run theatres were where the box office potential was greatest for films, with an estimated 50 to 75% of the revenue coming from these theatres due to their bigger seating capacity and spectators wanting to see the film as soon as it was released (Schatz, 1998, p.39). Before the standardisation of sound in film, first-run theatres were also more likely to have orchestras, unlike second-run or subsequent-run theatres, which were likely to either; have an organ that could give the illusion of an orchestra or no musical accompaniment at all (Cook, 1996, p.206). As the Big Five owned the largest number of first-run theatres in the largest cities of the United States and were able to dictate what appeared in theatres, they were guaranteed the majority of the box office revenue, with what was leftover being then split by the Little Three and finally to the independent studios.

The construction of more theatres also provided other benefits for the major studios other than just greater accessibility for spectators. With greater confidence that their films would earn money, producers could afford to raise their budget for future features with confidence, which meant that some of the studios would compete with each other by offering higher production values, which smaller studios would find harder than other majors to compete with due to the lack of revenue they had in comparison. Famous Players-Lasky, still following Zukor's desire to attract audiences through bankable stars (Wu, 2010, p.63), competed against these other studios by having large stars under contract, with Gomery

stating “Famous Players differentiated its films using stars” (1986, p.4). Even with the loss of Mary Pickford to First National, they still had stars such as Clara Bow, Gary Cooper and Rudolph Valentino, who could be relied upon to bring in audiences. The stars were a central part of the studio’s business plan, evident with the twenty two stars in their logo, a visual representation of the original number of stars under Paramount’s contract and an implication that “Paramount had more stars than there were in the universe” (Paramount, 2016). Famous-Players Lasky had also experienced success towards the end of the 1920’s with their production, *Wings* (Wellman, 1927), which had grossed $3.6 million (New York Times, 1932) and received the first Academy Award for Best Picture (Paramount, 2016), with the production starring Clara Bow and Gary Cooper in a minor role. Other studios also found their specific audiences, with Universal becoming known in the 1930’s for horror films such as *Dracula* (Browning, 1931) and adventure serials, like *Flash Gordon* (Stephani, 1936), while RKO would produce stylish films, such as the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers films, *Flying Down to Rio* (Freeland, 1933) or *Top Hat* (Sandrich, 1935).

As the studios had different audiences or different reasons for their films to be viewed, the studios were able to benefit from each other. Most of the theatres at the time would change their programmes at least twice a week and each major produced around forty to sixty features a year (Balio, 1985, p.254). As a result, studios which owned theatres needed features from other studios in order to fill their programmes (Bordwell & Thompson, 2009, p.200). In order to achieve this, the majors would collaborate with each other with a significantly decreased risk of one studio’s production impacting another studio’s production due to the different target audiences and high average weekly cinema attendance in the United States (Cowden, 2015). Through this collaboration, the smaller studios would have their chances of success further decreased as they were unlikely to be selected to fill the

majors' programmes, as they did not have bankable stars that would draw in the audiences or the high production values like the other major studios did, which only further decreased the chances of them being allowed to show one of their productions at a first-run theatre owned by a major was already extremely low.

United States vs Paramount

The Federal Trade Commission had begun investigating Famous Players-Lasky in 1921, specifically their use of block booking to coerce exhibitors into showing all of their features. However, the case also examined the studio's expansive ownership of theatres and their use of alternatively named companies to hide their connections with the parent company (Gil, 2008, p.98). The case lasted until 1927, where the FTC stated that by partaking in block booking, Famous Players-Lasky was taking part in a trade practice now deemed unfair (Hollywood Renegades, 2005). The studio was ordered to send in a report on how they intended to reform, which they delayed until the 15th April 1928. However, their report instead disagreed with the allegations and denied that they had used block booking in the way that the FTC had stated they had. The FTC rejected this reported this report and instead chose to go after not just Famous Players-Lasky, but the studio system as a whole. Ten different companies of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America were accused of using monopolistic practices and being in control of 98% of distribution within the United States (Hollywood Renegade, 2005). However, in 1929, the Wall Street Crash occurred and was immediately followed by the Great Depression. The film industry was also experiencing a decrease in weekly average cinema admissions (Cowden, 2015) due to the freshness of sound wearing off and the economy plummeting. Due to this, the U.S. Supreme Court was reluctant to put any action into effect that would have further negative impact upon the

American film industry during this time of crisis. As a result of this inaction, the United States government had given the majors permission to continue actions such as block booking and vertical integration, as this would allow the film industry to continue to survive throughout the Great Depression. However, as a consequence of this inaction, this also meant that the independent producers, exhibitors and the Federal Trade Commission did not have their problems with the American film industry fully addressed, resulting in the majors continuing to use monopolistic practices, for the time being, unchallenged while the majors were able to keep their place at the top secure.

However, in the start of the 1930's, the majors began to occasionally cooperate with B-Studios, also known as Poverty Row, in order to increase cinema admissions. In an attempt to minimise the damage occurring from the economic crisis, which had already seen the majors stock value reduced from "a 1930 high of $960 million to $140 million in 1934" (Balio, 1985, p.256), theatres began to exhibit films in the double bill format. For the price of one ticket, spectators would get to view an animated short, a newsreel and two features, with one of these features being the main feature and the other being the B feature (Whitington, 2008). The double bill concept quickly began to see results as weekly cinema attendance began to rise back up (Cowden, 2015) and by 1935, 85% of American theatres were offering double bills to spectators (Cook, 1996, p.250). The cooperation between the majors and the Poverty Row studios was due to the fact that the majors were reluctant to produce their own B films, as they were rented out to exhibitors at a flat rate instead of the standard splitting box office receipts (Cook, 1996, p.251) and the B films were not played at first-run theatres, where most of the box office potential was, due to the fact that they were considered prestigious theatres that were not suitable for the less-prestigious B films (Epstein, 2005, p.183). As the films were rented to exhibitors at a flat rate, there was little financial risk, but it did mean that the

profits could not be higher than the flat rate, unless specified in a separate contract. However, there was also the potential for B films to run over budget, which would further minimise the already limited profit margin. It was because of the majors reluctance that Poverty Row studios were formed, with two most of the influential being Monogram Pictures, founded by W. Ray Johnston and Trem Carr, and Republic Pictures, formed by Herbert J. Yates' consolidation of six smaller independent companies (Stephens & Wanamaker, 2014, p.121). With the B-Studios being paid at a flat rate, it also gave the majors a small degree of security in that the B-Studios, with their slim profit margins, would have the necessary funds to rise up the hierarchy of the American film industry, meaning that the majors position would not be threatened by these smaller studios. The double bill format was also further enhanced for customers with additional new concepts designed to bring them in, such as the selling of food and drinks at the theatres, as well as intermissions between the A film and the B film, which gave customers more time to get any food if they wanted (Gomery, 1986, p.21). With the double bill format providing hours of entertainment for a low price, which was needed for the American public of the 1930's, the weekly cinema attendance increased and peaked in 1942, with 60% of the United States population attending the cinema weekly on average (Cowden, 2015). This statistic remained around a similar level for the next few years, before slightly decreasing in 1947, when cinema would begin to face competition through television.

With the eight studios controlling the film industry and the structure of the Hollywood Studio System prevented smaller companies from either surviving or getting higher profits, due to systems such as block booking, blind bidding and the vertical integration of the majors, the federal Government started legal action against the majors in 1938. The United States v. Paramount Pictures involved the Government accusing the studios of conspiring to restrain trade and monopolising the film industry (United States v. Paramount, 1948). In 1940, the

studios were issued a consent decree which allowed them to retain their theatre chains in exchange for a few demands. The majors were to limit block booking to five films per block, blind bidding would be replaced with trade showing, which required all films to be shown to potential exhibitors and the majors were not allowed to increase the number of theatres they owned without receiving approval from the federal Government first (Hollywood Renegades, 2005) However, the Little Three rejected the consent decree as they received nothing from the deal. Because of their rejection, the consent decree expired, allowing the Big Five to resume their former practices and for the Government to reopen their case (Hollywood Renegades, 2005**)**. With the case being reopened, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the majors were in violation of anti-trust laws, instructing the studios to remove their theatres over the next five years (Balio, 1985, p.403). This was known as the Paramount Decree and it was significant in the end of the Hollywood Studio System, as there was no longer a guarantee of venues to exhibit their productions and block booking was no longer a practice they could use to their advantage. In 1946, the film industry produced 1.5% of United States corporate profits, three times higher than was originally expected (Gomery, 1986, p.7). However, post-Paramount Decree, the average weekly cinema attendance in the United States declined considerably (Cowden, 2015) as studios were having to take more care with the quality of their features instead of relying on quantity as they could no longer rely on exhibition chains being persuaded to purchase their entire programme.

Disruption through Suburbs & Television

After the Second World War, there were two developments that worked in tandem to further disrupt the stability of the Hollywood Studio System, the rise in popularity of television and an increase in the number of Americans living in the suburbs. The Federal Housing

Administration gave construction companies loans with low interest and improved mortgaging processes for new homes in the suburbs, with these actions increasing home ownership by 20% from 1940 to 1960 (Nicolaides & Wiese, 2017). These new homes were built in a uniform style in order to save costs, allowing city residents who may have previously rented, to be able to afford to purchase a house in the suburbs, especially with the FHA's changes to mortgages. As America's economy was undergoing a post-war boom and many Americans moving to the suburbs, there was an increase in disposable income for the majority of citizens. With this disposable income came an increase in spending, with houses, furniture and white goods increasing in sales and, by the end of the 1950's, 75% of American households owned at least one car (Pruitt, 2020). One of the other luxuries that Americans could now afford to purchase was a television set, as Spiegel states, "Between 1948 and 1955, television was installed in nearly two-thirds of the nation's homes" and "By 1960, almost 90 percent of American households had at least one receiver, with the average person watching approximately five hours of television each day" (1992, p.1). The increase in the ownership of television sets was problematic for the major studios, as they were already dealing with the effects of the Paramount Decree, but now had direct competition with television, which had multiple advantages over cinema. Television could be viewed from the comfort of the viewer's own home, which was a big advantage for those who lived in the suburbs and away from the city located theatres, it did not involve extra costs past the initial purchase and electricity usage, it gave a greater variety of short-form entertainment and it restored "faith in family togetherness" (Spiegel, 1992, p.1), an optimistic ideal for a country who have just been involved in a war to strive for. The accessibility of television was an issue as it challenged the exhibition stage of the vertically integrated studios, disrupting the Hollywood Studio System in a way that could continue to be an issue for the majors if they did not act soon.

Cinema still had its advantages over television, with the size of the theatre screens being unbeaten, the high production values and the accessibility of colour. All three of these factors contributed to the idea of films being grand spectacles that needed to lure the audience in with its style. In response to the growing threat of television, the studios responded by increasing the production of films with colour increased and experimenting with new technologies, namely Cinerama, 3-D and CinemaScope. Cinerama was a process that utilised three cameras that were put together in order to capture a wider image, which could then be projected onto a larger screen by having three projectors placed in an arc (Dempewolff, 1952, p.234), while it was also coupled with stereophonic sound to provide a more immersive experience for the audience. The first use of Cinerama was in 1952 with the film *This is Cinerama* (Todd, Todd Jr., Thompson & Rickley, 1952), a documentary designed to introduce Cinerama to the public by showing various set pieces, of no narrative connection, that were enhanced in both visuals and audio through the new process. It was a critical and financial success (Variety, 1958), however Cinerama was expensive for the filmmakers and theatre owners, with the installation costs coming to $75,000 (Cook, 1996, p.390). It was an innovative technique, but it provided no immediate relief to the threat of television. As a result, Cinerama did not last long, but it did prove to the studios that audiences could be brought back to the theatres by not sticking to the standard Academy aspect ratio.

However, the next idea to bring audiences in was a different change to the visuals of the theatres with a 3-D process known as Natural Vision. While 3-D had been utilised prior to the 1950's, with the now lost *The Power of Love* (Deverich & Fairall, 1922) premiering three decades before (Patterson, 2009), Natural Vision used a different method in which two cameras would film the same shots, but with the distance equal to the gap between human

eyes, onto two separate negatives, which would then be projected at the same angles as the cameras had been recorded on. The audience would then view the film wearing lenses that would complete the illusion of watching a 3-D film (Cook, 1996, p.391). Natural Vision was first used for the release of *Bwana Devil* (Oboler, 1952) which was a financial success, grossing $5 million on a budget of $323,000 (Thompson, 1961), inspiring studios to make their own 3-D productions. Columbia produced *Fort Ti* (Castle, 1953) after being inspired by *Bwana Devil*'s success (Castle, 1976, p.124), Universal produced *It Came from Outer Space* (Arnold, 1953) and Paramount released *Sangaree* (Ludwig, 1953). By producing these films, and more, in 3-D, the majors were able to use 3-D as a marketing tool to incentivise viewers to come to the theatres, with the three previously mentioned films all announcing the use of 3-D in big bold letters on their theatrical posters. This new tool was quickly exploited and "between 1953 and 1954 Hollywood produced sixty-nine features in 3-D" (Cook, 1996, p.391), however the 3-D process did not last long for a multitude of reasons. It was hard to produce more dramatic films while utilising a process that was considered to be a gimmick, with 3-D usually being used for horror films such as *House of Wax* (DeToth, 1953) and science fiction, with an example being the aforementioned *It Came from Outer Space.* An additional issue for 3-D was that two technicians were needed to ensure that the two prints did not accidentally go out of sync during projection, as this would result in the film becoming unwatchable (Lewis, 2020). As a result, the process was temporarily discontinued, reappearing in full thirty years later. Now wanting another way to compete against television and keep the Hollywood Studio System alive, the studios instead turned to the format known as CinemaScope.

CinemaScope was purchased by Henri Chrétien and was seen as an improvement on the prior two processes. Unlike the other processes, which required no specialised equipment apart

from the lenses, screen and some minor changes to the projectors, it was relatively easy for exhibitors to convert and by 1957, 80% of the theatres in the United States were capable of showing CinemaScope films (Bordwell, Thompson & Staiger, 1985, p.360). However, CinemaScope did also have its issues. The feature would appear dimmer, the greater rectangle shape of the projection would result in close-ups becoming distorted and there was a greater film grain from when it had been blown up (Cook, 1996, p.393). However, the first production to use CinemaScope, *The Robe* (Koster, 1953), which had its production delayed in order to take advantage of the new process (Belton & Bragg, 1988, p.361), was very financially successful upon its release, receiving $32 million (Variety, 1955, p.8) and becoming one of the highest grossing films of the 1950's. Other studios contacted 20th Century Fox and were able to get licenses for CinemaScope, apart from Paramount (Cook, 1996, p.393) Paramount instead debuted their own widescreen process, VistaVision, with the release of *White Christmas* (Curtiz, 1954). In a contemporary review, Bosley Crowther wrote "The colors on the big screen are rich and luminous, the images are clear and sharp, and rapid movements are got without blurring – or very little – such as sometimes is seen on other large screens." (1954, p.16). VistaVision would be used by Paramount throughout the decade, ending with *One-Eyed Jacks* (Brando, 1961), although other studios would continue to use it for special effects work. While CinemaScope and VistaVision were both successful, especially after both underwent adjustments to fix initial complaints, they were ultimately replaced by Panavision, which had a much clearer image and was close to being free of any distortions that came from the size (Cook, 1996, p.394).

The different attempts at competing with television had been semi-successful, as they had successfully got the American public back into cinemas, however they were still competing directly with television which was still growing in popularity throughout the 1950's,

especially due to the fact that televisions were becoming more integral to the American household lifestyle, with television shows such as *I Love Lucy* (Oppenheimer, 1951-1957) becoming extremely popular and the American public wishing to stay informed about world events such as the Korean War and the Cold War, with television being a quick way of receiving such information. With it becoming clear that cooperation with television would be crucial to the survival of the Hollywood studios, they instead began to sell their existing catalogue of films to television channels (REB, 2015). This process had already done prior, with the broadcast of *The Crooked Circle* (Humberstone, 1932), however it became a more common practice. It also meant that new films produced by the studios could be made cheaper by not using colour, due to televisions not yet having the means to afford colour broadcasting (REB, 2015), although this would change as the number of households with colour televisions increased (Television Obscurities, 2005). Paramount, unlike the other majors, was not as willing to cooperate with television, resulting in it experiencing financial losses. Purchased by the conglomerate Gulf & Western Industries, President Barney Balaban was replaced by Charles Bludhorn and the company underwent a reorganisation, embracing both independent productions and television productions (Balio, 1985, p.443).

As a result of the growing competition with television throughout the 1950's and the effects that had came from the Paramount Decree, by 1958, 65% of the features produced in Hollywood were independent productions. Out of all the majors, United Artists was the least affect as they did not have studio space and theatre chains. Universal was absorbed by Decca Records in 1952, production of feature films fell from 383 in 1950 to 254 by 1955 and RKO ceased production in 1957 (Cook, 1996, p.427). The purchase and overhaul of Paramount helped to prevent any further decline in the post-studio system era, allowing Paramount to continue to survive, acting as a production and distribution company to this day. By 1966,

30% of features made in the United States were produced independently, while 50% were shot on location in foreign countries, meaning that only 20% of the features produced were made in the Studio System, in stark contrast to the 95% in 1930 (Cook, 1996, p.427). The Paramount Decree was a setback for many of the major studios, as it upset the stability and security which had been provided from processes such as block booking and their vertically integrated structure. However, the dawn and popularity of television was a much greater challenge for the studio system to overcome as it provided the audiences entertainment from the comfort of their own home, which was a greater desire with the growing developments of suburbs further away from the cities of the United States. It was clear that even though many of the majors are still operating to this day, that the Hollywood Studio System had effectively been killed by the combined effects of the anti-trust suit and television. While the practices of the studios later deemed illegal by the Paramount Decree had helped them to rise their status and keep their position secure, it was not the only method used by the studios. Developments in technology was a key part of the studio system's survival, as it encouraged the medium of cinema to evolve and thus forcing the studios to adapt or risk having their position in the system stolen.

Development of Sound

A core element of cinema is sound, whether it is music or dialogue, it is hard to imagine a film made in the modern day without it. However, in its inception, cinema was silent. Theatres would have musical accompaniments, such as an orchestra or an organ (Cook, 1996, p.206), however the actual film itself would be silent. It would take 30 years of experimentation and development before sound technology had advanced to the point that it was able to become a standardised part of the cinematic medium. The standardisation was led by Warner Bros., a minor at the time, who, like most of the studios, saw a new development within the film industry that could be used to secure their position at the top of the American film industry and increase their annual profits. While Warner Bros. was the studio that spearheaded the conversion, the idea of combining sound and film together had existed decades prior, with the profits that could be achieved by a successful pairing being tempting to potential entrepreneurs.

There were early attempts at sound systems that could be used to synchronise phonograph recordings with film strips, such as Phonorama, Chronophone and Phono-Cinéma Théâtre, all three of which debuted at the Paris World Exhibiton of 1900. These systems all relied on the phonograph to reproduce sound and would rely on either wax cylinders or discs. By being reliant on the two latter components, there were also issues when it came to exhibition. These issues could range from desynchronisation from when the discs or cylinders were changed, difficulty in amplifying the sound for a large venue and the sound accompaniments being shorter than the standard length of a feature at the time (Cook, 1998, p.206). The early sound systems still had a lot of work needed and, despite the different systems, did not have enough demand from audiences to attract investors from overseas, leaving the development of sound

as a purely European concept for the time. However, with World War One occurring in 1914 and lasting for four years, development of sound technology slowed down considerably.

However, once the First World War was over, German inventors, Josef Engl, Joseph Massole & Hans Vogt, developed the first sound-on-film system. Named the Tri-Ergon process, it converted sound waves into electric impulses, that were then further converted into light waves that were then recorded on the edge of a film strip. Built onto their projector, was a component that would revert the recorded light waves back into sound waves as the film played, which would ensure that synchronisation between sound and visuals was achieved. The process also utilised a mechanisation that prevented sudden shifts in the speed of which the strip would pass through the equipment, effectively eliminating potential distortions of sound (Parkinson, 2012). With the Tri-Ergon process removing most of the problems that affected earlier sound systems and as such, it was immediately desirable overseas, with its American rights being purchased in 1927 by the Fox Film Corporation, seeing the potential profits that a combination of sound and film could bring.

Four years prior, in 1923, Dr. Lee De Forest patented a similar system to Tri-Ergon, also being sound-on-film. However, what made De Forest's sound-on-film system more impressive was that it also fixed the issue of amplification that had plagued prior systems. To improve radio reception, De Forest had earlier patented the Audion 3-Electrode Amplifier Tube, which was a vacuum tube that would receive sound electronically and amplify it. By incorporating the two inventions together, De Forest's sound-on-film system was able to provide the most amplification of the time (Enhanced Media, 2019). In November 1922, he founded the De Forest Phonofilm Company, where, working with composer of a silent-film scores, Hugo Risenfeld, they produced a series of short sound films. These short sound films

quickly found success as De Forest produced several one and two reel shorts each week, proving popular enough that halfway through 1924, an estimated 34 theatres in Europe had been set up with the necessary equipment to exhibit them, with another 50 in the process of being set up in countries such as England, Canada and the United States (Cook, 1996, p.207). However, De Forest's system did not appeal to the major studios, mainly due to the high expenses that would be needed to implement the system in the production and exhibition stages, especially as sound films were not considered as essential enough to invest such a high amount of money in. For now, until a cheaper system was developed and until sound films were considered to be demanded by audiences, the studios would delay a commitment to sound conversion.

The Success of Vitaphone

An alternative system, Vitaphone, was also developed that utilised a sound-on-disc process, using multiple 33 ½ rpm discs, which had been produced by Western Electric and Bell Telephone Laboratories. Similar to De Forest's system, it was also rejected by the major studios, once again due to the fact that the high costs involved in the conversion process were not deemed as worth the investment (Enhanced Media, 2019). With the majors rejecting it, Warner Bros., a minor studio at the time, decided to take a chance in investing in sound technology. Compared to the majors, Warner Bros. had a lot to gain from pursuing sound, as it had the potential of giving them an advantage over the productions of the majors which could in turn elevate their status as a studio (Lewis, 2008, p.94), bringing them to the same position as studios such as Paramount or Universal. With additional funding provided by Goldman Sachs, Warner Bros. established the Vitaphone Corporation rented the system from Western Electric and were able to purchase the exclusive rights to loan it to other studios for

an additional $800,000 (Cook, 1996, p.208). The purpose of the Vitaphone system, at least in the eyes of Warner Bros., was to enhance the appeal of their productions when it was released in second and third-run theatres that lacked orchestras, thus providing them with a musical accompaniment that would be synchronised with the screen (Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson, 1985, p.298). This would also work as a long-term solution when it came to saving money, as they would not have to pay for their theatres to have orchestras or organs, as they could instead pay for the score to be recorded once and then it could be reused for all the different showings of their production.

The first feature produced by the Vitaphone Corporation, and by extension Warner Bros., was *Don Juan* (Crosland, 1926). The film was accompanied by a recorded orchestral score and preceding the feature was an hour of sound shorts to further demonstrate the capability of the Vitaphone system (Lewis, 2008, p.96), with one of the shorts being a speech by William Hays, President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (Variety, 1926). *Don Juan* was an extrem3ely successful debut for the Vitaphone system, playing for eight weeks in New York where it was seen by 500,000 people who paid almost $800,000 (Cook, 1996, p.208). Furthermore, it had record-breaking runs in several major American cities, such as Chicago, Los Angeles & Boston. The success of *Don Juan* made it clear to the majors that a full conversion to sound would be an inevitability due to how the audiences and critics reacted, especially financially. However, a full conversion to sound was still an economic risk that made the majors cautious to take the risk and upset the stable security that the studio system had so far provided them. In order to minimise the risk as much as possible, the majors made a deal, known as the Big Five Agreement, in which they would all agree to adopt the same sound system once a full conversion was absolutely necessary (Enhanced Media, 2019). By doing this, the costs of conversion would be significantly reduced and

when the transition did occur, it would be considerably less risky to the stability of the studio system.

Warner Bros., inspired by the success that *Don Juan* had given them, announced that all of their features in 1927 would be paired with a synchronised musical accompaniment. The studio also announced its plans to buy a large theatre in every large American city and set up the proper equipment so that they could exhibit sound films. Warner Bros. was committed to this plan and by April 1927, 150 theatres had been installed with the proper exhibition equipment. That same month, Warner Bros. had also finished construction of the first sound studio in the world (Cook, 1996, p.210). It was clear that Warner Bros. knew from the success of *Don Juan* that sound films were an inevitability, and that by taking the risk of investing so heavily in sound, they would ensure that they were on the forefront of this new cutting-edge technology and that they would be able to boost their status and become a major. The next film of Warner Bros. and the Vitaphone Corporation would only further ensure that their investment was worth the risk, with the release of Alan Crosland's *The Jazz Singer* (1927)

The Jazz Singer premiered on the 6th October 1927 in New York City and, like *Don Juan* before it, utilised the Vitaphone process. What set *The Jazz Singer* apart from the latter was that it featured lead actor, Al Jolson, improvising the line "Wait a minute, wait a minute, you ain't heard nothin' yet." While audiences had heard dialogue from screen before, such as from the speech by William Hays prior to *Don Juan*, what made this impactful at the time was that Jolson's line was delivered to the camera, in a way that, in essence, created the illusion of Jolson's character talking directly to the audience in a way that seemed naturalistic. Aside from another brief talking scene later on in the film between two

characters, the rest of the film's dialogue was told through intertitles. However, the impact of Jolson's improvisation was undeniable, with Robert Sherwood, an American playwright, being quoted as saying "I for one suddenly realised the end of silent drama is in sight" (Eyman, 1997, p.141). *The Jazz Singer* was not extremely successful, although its low budget did increase the profit margin (Maltby, 2003, p.96) but this can also be reasoned that the effect of *The Jazz Singer* would not have been felt by most theatres in the United States due to the fact that they were not wired for sound, instead it would be experienced by mainly first-run theatres that had been equipped with the proper equipment to exhibit a sound film. Despite just being a moderate success, the financial takings of *The Jazz Singer* were not the main talking point within Hollywood, it is what effects would it have upon the industry as a whole. *The Jazz Singer* worked in Hollywood as a turning point in changing the minds of the studios, from aversion to awareness that sound films were inevitable.

With the financial success of *Don Juan* and *The Jazz Singer*, the majors were finally convinced to start investing in sound recording equipment, hoping to use this technology to help support their own productions and revenue stream. Fox had, as mentioned earlier, previously purchased the Tri-Ergon system for $50,000 and another sound-on-film system from Theodore W. Case and Earl I. Sponable, which was a similar system to De Forest's. Forming the Fox-Case Corporation in July 1926, the goal was to produce short films that utilised the sound equipment and exhibit them in theatres using the brand name, Fox Movietone. Movietone premiered in January 1927, but it was not until the fifth Movietone programme received critical acclaim and proved to Fox the value of sound films. The programme in question was a silent feature but had sound shorts that included speeches from famous personalities such as President Calvin Coolidge and Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini (Cook, 1996, p.211). By featuring these known figures and allowing the audience

to hear them speak while watching them, in contrast to other mediums such as radio, the reception was positive and inspired William Fox and his newsreel producer, Courtland Smith, to establish the Fox Movietone News, a regular sound newsreel, which would allow them to profit off the positive reactions that the audience had. The popular reaction to Movietone News further convinced Fox that sound was the inevitable next step for the film industry, so a contract was negotiated between Fox-Case and Vitaphone, where both corporations would license the other their respective sound systems, studios, technicians and theatres (Cook, 1996, p.212). The reasoning behind this agreement was so that the corporations would have assurance that they would be fine if one of the sound systems proved more popular and also meant that they could combine their assets together and unite against the other studios. This deal benefitted Fox more than it did Warner Bros. as the latter studio had done the best financially in 1927 out of all the studios, due in part for their conversion to sound (Cook, 1996, p.212). The increased availability of cars had impacted cinema admissions negatively (US History, 2014), now that Americans had more options for activities to do in their free time, however, as sound was a fresh, new concept, it acted as a unique selling point that was more attractive to audiences than silent films were, especially as both Warner Bros. and Fox were not hesitant to use their sound technologies in the marketing of their films.

Standardisation of Sound

Now that it had been financially proven that sound films were taking over silent films in the interest of the public, the studios involved in the Big Five Agreement had decided to choose which sound system to use, which they now had several options for. Western Electric had produced another system that utilised the sound-on-film process, Fox had Movietone and the Radio Corporation had also developed a new system called Photophone. Paramount, United

Artists, First National and Loew's decided to adopt Western Electric's system, with other studios such as Columbia and Universal soon followed in their stead (Lewis, 2008, p.98). Phonophone was not chosen by the studios, so David Sarnoff of RCA organised the creation of his own studio. Through the acquisition of the Film Booking Offices of America production and distribution studio and the Keith-Albee-Orpheum exhibition chain, the Radio-Keith-Orpheum company was formed, a new vertically integrated major (Lewis, 2008, p.98). By uniting these separate entities together, RKO could now further push the Phonophone system into the market and gain a better position within the studio system, which would eventually work in their favour as through their films they would elevate their status and become one of the Big Five studios.

Warner Bros. also released the film *Lights of New York* (Foy, 1928), a film that was produced on the low budget of $23,000 and was the first all-talkie production. While the film was initially not meant to be the first all-talkie, with the Warners wanting it to be a production that could be considered more prestigious, likely in an attempt to further guarantee the chances of higher sales admissions (Eyman, 1997, p.176). However, due to the efforts of director Bryan Foy, *Lights of New York* premiered as the first all-talkie and despite being considered a poor picture by critics (New York Times, 1928), the film was a box office success, taking in $1.2 million, likely supported by the fact that in the marketing, special mention was given to the fact that it was the first "all-talking" picture. Darryl Zanuck, on the success of *Lights of New York*, is quoted as saying *"*The Jazz Singer turned them to sound. The Lights of New York to talk. It turned the whole goddamn tide." (Eyman, 1997, p.176). Zanuck's statement was proven correct as quickly the industry underwent the conversion process. Between December 1927 and December 1929, the number of theatres wired for sound increased by more than 50 times and by 1929, ¾ of features produced in Hollywood used pre-recorded sound. The cost

of conversion was extremely high, however it quickly proved to be worth the cost as weekly attendance in the United States rose from 60 million to 90 million between 1927 and 1930, with box office receipts also increasing by 50%. Warner Bros., who had been on the forefront of the conversion, had recorded a deficit of over $1 million in 1927, however by 1929 they were reporting profits of $16 million. The risk they had taken by pursuing sound had proven to be worth it, as they were able to use these profits to purchase 500 different exhibition outlets through the combined purchases of Stanley Theatre Chain and First National, elevating their status in the Hollywood studio system and placing them in a more secure position than they had been two years prior (Cook, 1996, p.214). In a similar vein, Fox's profits also increased substantially through their part in the sound conversion and through their increased profits, they constructed a $10 million sound studio and William Fox was able to purchase a controlling interest in Loew's for $50 million and a 45% share in English major, Gaumont-British, for $20 million (Cook, 1996, p.214). As the other studios also produced more sound films, their profits also began to improve significantly, even with the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the average weekly cinema attendance in the United States was at 65% in 1930 (Cowden, 2015).

Now that sound had become essentially standardised and the upfront costs had been paid, producers and filmmakers now needed to use sound to make sure that their investment was worth it. A film such as *Dracula* (Browning, 1931) was produced in three different alternative ways that had the goal of maximising profit. The first was a sound version of the film spoken in the English language with Bela Lugosi playing the titular role, the second was a Spanish version, *Dracula* (Melford, 1931) that starred Carlos Villarias as the Count and a third silent version that utilised the English language cast but used intertitles in lieu of dialogue. This tactic would thus allow Universal to reap as much potential profit as possible

by tapping into the respective markets of English language & Spanish language audiences, while also taking in money from theatres yet not wired for sound, or additional foreign markets where the intertitles can be swapped for no additional cost. This process proved effective as *Dracula* received a profit of $700,000, the largest of Universal's releases in the year of 1931 (Vieira, 1931, p.35). While this is a single case, it demonstrates how a studio could still use the late-transition period of silent to sound to boost their box office revenues by using the technology in a way that allowed the film to be shown at as many venues as possible.

Sound's standardisation also led to the rise in popularity of one of the defining genres of the Golden Age of Hollywood, the musical. As film had always been paired with music, either orchestras, organs or De Forest's Phonofilm Company, the musical genre seemed like the next logical step. While *The Jazz Singer* was a musical film, and thus could be considered the first musical, the MGM production *The Broadway Melody* (Beaumont, 1929) is a significant example in that it was, unlike *The Jazz Singer,* an 'all-talkie' that also utilised a Technicolor sequence. Through the marketing of *The Broadway Melody*, it can be seen that sound was clearly seen as the bigger draw to audiences in the eyes of the studios. Promoted as Metro-Goldwyn Mayer's "Talking, Singing, Dancing, Dramatic Sensation", the production was a huge success, grossing $4.4 million on a budget of $379,000 and winning the Academy Award for Best Picture (Wierzbicki, 2008, p.116). More musical films were released throughout the Golden Age, such as *Top Hat* (Sandrich, 1933) and *Shall We Dance* (Sandrich, 1937), with the two listed productions being examples of the popular Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers musical comedies series. Throughout the 1940's and 1950's, MGM also became known for their musicals, with some notable examples being *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Minnelli, 1944) and *Singin' in the Rain* (Donen & Kelly, 1952), both productions were

successful at the box office and the latter is considered by modern critics as one of the greatest films of all time (White, 2022). It is hard to imagine the Golden Age of Hollywood without the musical genre, and without sound, there would be no musical in the sense of what a Hollywood musical is considered to be. The development of sound technology and the adoption of the systems by the studio were able to keep admissions steady, although slowly declining, throughout the financial crisis of the Great Depression (Cowden, 2015), but it would also act as a significant turning point for the film industry as a whole. The films of the early 20th Century and the films of the mid-20th Century contrasted dramatically and, while many elements were crucial to this drastic change, it is hard to understate how significant sound was.

The conversion to sound was a process that was pushed forward by Warner Bros. and Fox to elevate their status, a move that threatened the stability of the other studios involved in the studio system. Once it became clear that conversion would be the only necessary move to keep their position secure, the studios adopted sound technology. The conversion to sound is an example of one of the many processes that the studios would use to keep the studio system stable, adopting new technologies when it became clear that the financial benefit to be had from it would be worth the investment. This would be further reflected upon the further advancements in technology relating to the film industry, such as the development of colour filmmaking, 3-D technology and the variations in aspect ratios. If it became clear that change was the only way of keeping their position stable, then the studios would invest in the change to ensure that they remained secure.

The Role of Colour

While films in colour are now the standard, it took decades of developing different forms of colour technology for this to be the situation. As early methods of colour filmmaking proved, there was a degree of interest from both studios and audiences, which only grew as more spectators witnessed colour films and studios realised the financial potential the technology could provide. With the standardisation of sound proving to be successful at securing the majors positions and keeping the Hollywood Studio System relatively stable, colour provided another technology that studios could adopt in order to further keep their positions secure. It was in the late 1930's that the majors began to take the risk of investing heavily, producing more features that utilised colour technology, with one of the most famous colour films from this time period being *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939). With the necessary funding to be able to invest in colour films, the majors were able to utilise the new technology as another way of keeping their position and, as a result, the Hollywood Studio System stable and secure.

In 1861, physicist James Clerk Maxwell demonstrated the principles of colour photography. Through the combination of the three primary colours in equal measure, white was produced. With this knowledge, a larger spectrum of colours could be produced by either adding to the primary colours or subtracting from the white, in methods called the additive and the subtractive (Tolstoy, 1981, p.43). While this demonstration was conducted for the purpose of photography, these principles would be used for the early methods of colour filmmaking and would be the principles used by companies such as the Technicolor Corporation and Eastman Kodak to gain a monopoly on the colour photography industry, an action that resulted in the majors having a de-facto oligopoly on colour films.

Before Maxwell's additive and subtractive principles were used in films, there was still some ambitions to provide colour filmmaking. One of the first processes used was to paint the film by hand, which was a process used for films such as Georges Méliès's *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) by the workshop of French mother-daughter duo, Élisabeth and Marie-Berthe Thuiller (Solomon, 2011, p.52). A similar process was later used called Pathécolor, developed by Charles Pathé, which was a mechanical version that used a pantograph to create stencils of the film's individual frames that were cut to correspond with the area of the frames to be coloured. These stencils were then paired with the print and processed through a staining machine (Cook, 1996, p.215). Both of these processes were semi-successful with features that utilised them, such as *The Miracle* (Carré, 1912), proving to be financial and critical successes (Cinema News and Property Gazette, 1913, p.21). However, both methods were expensive, time consuming and required too many people for it to be sustainable, although they both set the foundation for audience interest in colour films, an interest which would only grow with further developments of colour filmmaking technologies.

A process that showed some promise was the Lee-Turner colour process, later modified to become, what it is now more commonly known as, Kinemacolor. Developed by Edward Raymond Turner and funded by Frederik Marshall Lee, the process utilised Maxwell's colour photography principles. A camera was combined with a rotating disk accessory, which had filters of the primary colours. When recording, the filters would alternate, and the film would then be projected three frames at a time through the matching colour filters (Lee & Turner, 1899). In contrast to the previously mentioned methods, the Lee-Turner colour process added no more extra time to production and, due to it being an additive method, created a larger variety of colours than the original three. However, fast moving subjects would appear blurry

as the three frames were not taken at the exact same time and the mechanisms within the projector were unstable, often resulting in out of sync footage (Cook, 1996, p.216). While the Lee-Turner colour process was semi-successful, it was clear that additional work would be needed for this process to become a huge success.

Frederick Marshall Lee was replaced as the primary investor by Charles Urban, who passed the project to George Albert Smith, after Edward Raymond Turner's death in 1903. Smith modified the process, removing the blue filter so only two primary colours were used, as the number of colours that could be produced with red and green was almost as many as if he had used all three (Jones, 1916). Urban and Smith demonstrated their simplified system to the Royal Society of Arts in 1908, now with the name Kinemacolor (Cook, 1996, p.216). Kinemacolor proved to be an improvement, with a clearer image that could show fast motion, as a result of using only two colours compared to the Lee-Turner processes' three colours. The process was successful as it was used for over 250 venues in 13 countries and for a large catalogue of films. However, the installation of the specialised projectors was expensive, and the company had a commitment to factual features when dramatic features were growing in demand, meaning that Kinemacolor's success did not last long (Jackson, 2011). Despite this short-lived success, Kinemacolor proved to companies that were was a worldwide interest in colour films, which encouraged others to pursue this new-found market.

Rise of Technicolor

Dr. Herbert Kalmus, Dr. Daniel Comstock and W. Burton Wescott, wishing to capitalise on the increased demand for colour filmmaking that Kinemacolor had proved, founded the Technicolor Corporation in 1915, with the intention of developing their own financially

successful two-colour process. The Technicolor Corporation's first process involved a film being projected through two apertures, one with a red filter and one with a green filter, with the two images being aligned on screen by a technician (Higgins, 2000, p.358). This process was first used by the Technicolor produced film, *The Gulf Between* (Physioc, 1917), as a proof of concept that could attract potential investors. Instead, the process was negatively received, with criticisms focused on sudden colour flashes, the constant need for a technician to realign the images and the fact that a specialised projector was needed, bringing up the expenses (Trenholm, 2017). However, the Technicolor Corporation was still determined to create an efficient process for wide use due to the high financial potential that could be achieved through colour filmmaking.

Developing a second method that instead imprinted the colour onto the film itself, this eliminated the need for a technician and a specialised projector, bringing the costs for studios down significantly (Cook, 1996, p.217). This new process was first used in *The Toll of the Sea* (Franklin, 1922) which was a financial success (Lewis, 2008, pp.100-101), however, the film was still costly, and the new method meant that more light was required during filming. Due to this, the process was rarely used for full features, e.g. *The Black Pirate* (Parker, 1926), but was more frequently used for sequences in larger productions, such as *The Ten Commandments* (DeMille, 1923) which was received high praise for its Technicolor sequences and was the second highest grossing film of the year.

Small changes to the process worked in Technicolor's favour, as over 30 features that were released in 1930 used Technicolor (Lewis, 2008, p.101). Even with the increased success, they continued to make changes and by 1932, the Technicolor Corporation had perfected a new process, their fourth one, that utilised the three primary colours, using a similar method

to their previous one. However, this process was still expensive and a larger camera was needed. Technicolor also demanded that cameras would have to be rented, not sold, that the cameraman must be a Technicolor cameraman hired by the studio and a consultant would advise the crew on what colour schemes to use for the film. These conditions were due to Technicolor's concerns that their previous processes were made to look of poorer quality due to untrained cinematographers (Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson, 1985, p.354), with Herbert Kalmus believing that "Many producers chose to film in the gaudiest colours, simply proclaiming that their product was in colour instead of black-and-white, but doing little to explore the aesthetic capacities of colour". (1993, p.83) This resulted in the bigger studios being wary to adopt this process, especially due to the fact that the films using the two-colour process were still as financially successful, with films like *The Life of the Party* (Ruth, 1930) and *The Cuckoos* (Sloane, 1930) making roughly double their budget, so there was no big financial incentive to take on the three-strip process and accept Technicolor's high demands.

As the Big Five and the Little Three studios did not wish to use the new process, as it was untested and would need a greater financial investment, Technicolor instead offered their three-strip process to smaller studios, such as Pioneer Pictures and Disney, as they also did not wish to go into production on their own due to the financial risks involved (Higgins, 2000, p.359). Disney was the first to use this new process, with their animated shorts, *Flowers and Tress* (Gillett, 1932) and *Three Little Pigs* (Gillett, 1933), which were critical and financial hits. Pioneer Pictures produced *La Cucaracha* (Corrigan, 1934) and *Becky Sharp* (Mamoulian, 1935), while both received mixed to negative reviews, their use of Technicolor's three-strip process was acclaimed, with *Variety* (1934) stating that *Becky Sharp* did "impress optically, but the story falls flat dramatically" With Disney's successes and Pioneer Pictures receiving praise for their usage of colours, the bigger studios were more

comfortable with experimenting with the new process, with Paramount producing *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (Hathaway, 1936) and Fox's *Ramona* (King, 1936). In 1937, Disney released *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Hand, 1937) to widespread critical acclaim and financial success, at one point being the most successful sound film of all time (History, 2009). This success prompted major studio MGM to invest in their own fantasy children's film (Fricke, 1989) purchasing the film rights for The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (Baum, 1900) from Samuel Goldwyn for $75,000 on the 3rd June 1938 (Harmetz, 1977, p.3).

Impact of Colour in the Wizard of Oz

While there are many parts of *The Wizard of Oz* that remain in the public consciousness to this day, such as the soundtrack, quotes from the film and characters, the film also has various pieces of iconography that utilised colour. The yellow brick road, protagonist Dorothy Gale's ruby slippers and the Emerald City of Oz, all portrayed in bright, vivid colours, have become iconic imagery of Old Hollywood. The fame of *The Wizard of Oz*'s colour has also led to the misconception of it being the first colour film, despite there being a history of colour films by this point (Nashville Film Institute, 2020). *The Wizard of Oz* is an example of how colour was used by major studios of Old Hollywood to support the narratives of their films and to be used as a tool for marketing their films to the audiences, which helped further continue the survival of the Hollywood Studio System by having the advantage of colour over independent productions.

The Wizard of Oz used Technicolor's three-strip process and to use the Technicolor cameras, studios of the time were required to pay $90 for each week that a camera was used along with $125 for the Colour Director, who in the case of *The Wizard of Oz* was Henri Jaffa (Harmetz,

1977, p.227). MGM was also required by the set conditions of Technicolor to also hire either a Technicolor First Cameraman, Second Cameraman or an Assistant Cameraman, to which they hired a Second Cameraman and an Assistant at a combined price of $187.50 a week (Harmetz, 1977, p.229). During the pre-production stage, many of the different departments such as set design and costume design were instructed to use as much colour as they could (Lintelman, 2010), with special care being placed to make sure that everything looked right, with the crew spending a week on finding the right shade of yellow for the famous yellow brick road (Clarke, 2000, p.94). According to Natalie Kalmus (1935, p.145) to prepare for a production, the Technicolor crew would "read the script and prepare a colour chart for the entire production, each scene, sequence, set and character being considered" which would in turn fit "the colour to the scene and augmenting its dramatic value" These instructions would in turn affect changes from the book as well, with Dorothy's slippers being changed from the book's silver to a vibrant red and the Emerald City actually being emerald, whereas in the source material the Emerald City only appeared to be that colour due to the characters wearing green-tinted glasses (Baum, 1900). These changes, along with other choices in the presentation of colour, have the effect of further reinforcing the separation between the sepia-toned 'reality' of Dust Bowl era Kansas to the vibrant, Technicolor-filled world of Oz. The choice to have the reality be presented in sepia instead of, like real life, in colour may have been chosen due to the historical context of when the film was made. In the 1930's, Kansas, along with other states in America, was plagued by the Dust Bowl (History, 2009) and the Great Depression. It can also be due to the fact that most films at the time were presented in black and white or sepia, which, to a spectator, would mean that the standard for a film set in 'real life' is colourless. As Arnheim (1957, p.22) stated "A multicoloured world has been transmuted into a black-and-white world, but in the process all colour values have changed their relations to one another." By portraying the film Kansas as colourless, compared to the

bright vibrancy of Oz, the film is able to simulate the feelings of the audience by placing them in Dorothy's figurative shoes, having her escape her colourless, dull life into the visually striking world of Oz with them. This effect can be shown being put into practice when Dorothy enters Oz, with the seamless transition to Technicolor. To achieve this effect, the interior of the house was painted brown and white while Judy Garland's body double was given a similarly brown and white costume and make-up to give the illusion of sepia, so that when the door was opened, Judy Garland would switch places in her coloured costume (Kawin, 2010). Through this special effect, the crew were able to achieve a similar sense of wonder and amazement that the character of Dorothy felt when she opened that door to Oz. The transition further encourages emotional attachment to the character of Dorothy whilst immediately establishing to the audience the fantastical nature of Oz and its separation from the established reality of the film.

The symbolic use of colour is present in other moments of *The Wizard of Oz* as well. The character of the Wicked Witch of the West has green-coloured skin, with the colour green often being associated in the media with antagonistic characters. This association of green with evil likely has its roots in toxic chemicals, such as arsenite, which, along with various sources of fictional media, established in public perception the idea that toxic waste or radioactive waste is green (Kruszelnicki, 2008). Green has also been used in media to portray envy, such as in *Othello* (Shakespeare, 1968), as Gillis (2006) theorises "The witch's green complexion represents her jealousy, both of Dorothy and the ruby slippers that only Dorothy can wear". By having her skin be green instead of her clothing, the film is also able to portray her as different, since green is not a natural skin pigment. This then allows her clothing to be black, which has been associated with witchcraft since the 13th century (Sheldon, 2018) and with secrecy or death even further. The combination of green and black is an immediate

visual code to the audience that the Wicked Witch of the West is going to be an antagonist of the film, further emphasised by the Witch being the only character to wear all black during her introductory scene.

The character of Glinda, the Good Witch of the North has a natural skin pigment and the colour scheme of her wardrobe is pink and silver, colours that are more pleasing to the eye than the Wicked Witch's all black wardrobe and, in their presentation, ethereal. Despite being a witch like the Wicked Witch of the West, the colours associated with her are drastically different. As she is the first living witch encountered, her being kind to Dorothy and stating "Only bad witches are ugly" establishes her as a good witch. This sets up the idea of what a good witch should look like to the audience, so that when the Wicked Witch of the West first appears, with an aesthetic very different from that of Glinda, there is an even greater visual indicator towards her being a bad witch.

In a similar contrast of colours as Glinda and the Wicked Witch of the West, the location of Munchkinland and the Wicked Witch's castle are very different. While Munchkinland is filled with bright colours and has a large variety, though mainly red, green and yellow, the Wicked Witch's castle consists of mainly dark colours such as brown, grey and black. With the different locations having different colour schemes, colour has been used to "identify story landmarks, such as Kansas (in black and white) and the Yellow Brick Road" (Bordwell, Thompson & Smith, 2017, p.52). Furthermore, with the Wicked Witch's castle, the few elements of brighter colours either consist of the red sand in the hourglass or the red and green from the Wicked Witch's guards. The green of the guards' skin can be linked to the Wicked Witch's skin being green and thus, non-natural, while red also has negative connotations linked to it, with the most prevalent one being danger, which works in the

narrative context of the hourglass as once it reaches out is when, as the Wicked Witch states, Dorothy will die. The colour red has also been linked to the Wicked Witch prior with her first entrance in Munchkinland, when she appears in a cloud of bright red smoke. This also contrasts heavily with Glinda, who appears to Dorothy in a bubble that changes colours before settling on a light pink as it gets closer to her. The pink of Glinda's bubble matches with her wardrobe while also being the colour associated with ideas such as femininity and calmness, traits which can be further associated with the character of Glinda. With the choices of colours to bring forth different cognitive responses, Neupert (1990, p.26) states "Colour is already theorised in terms of nature, art and psychology; the job of the Technicolor consultant is simply to ensure that those pre-existing rules are fully exploited by the film's colour schemes.", with his argument being that Technicolor can draw upon various forms of colour symbolism, which have already been explored in the past, to further increase the effectiveness of their own use of colour.

By using specific colours for the wardrobe, make-up and set design, *The Wizard of Oz* was able to use these choices to further support the narrative created while also setting visual ideas in the audience's heads of what the characters of *The Wizard of Oz* are like, with the colours associated with Glinda and the Wicked Witch of the North's immediately working as a visual aid to the audience to understand what these characters are like. As Robert Edmond Jones, production designer of early Technicolor films such as *Becky Sharp,* said "Emotion is colour" (Houghton, 1936, p.967) and that is clear with *The Wizard of Oz* as the emotional responses of the audience during moments such as Dorothy entering Oz and the Wicked Witch of the West's first appearance were greatly influenced through how colour was incorporated into the film's mise-en-scene. One of the criticisms of the previously mentioned *La Cucaracha* was that the colours overshadowed the story and that the lack of a diegetic

reasoning for its bright colours ruptured “the coherence of its illusion of reality.” (Belton, 1992). *The Wizard of Oz* can be seen as avoiding these issues by tying the colours into the narrative and emotions of its respective scenes, while also portraying Oz as a dream, where its use of colours is not subjected to the same laws as reality. While Rudolf Arnheim was critical of the use of colour in the cinematic medium in his book, *Film as Art* (1958, p.62), stating that it “does not provide the artist with a potentially useful medium of expression”, he has also stated “Form for form’s sake – this is the rock on which many film artists, especially the French, are shipwrecked” (1958, p.42). With there being a clear motivation behind the choices of colours, it can be seen that *The Wizard of Oz* was not created with no prior thought in mind. Furthermore, the former statement was written in 1933, only one year after Technicolor’s new three-colour process and where colour filmmaking was still at a stage where the Technicolor Corporation was unhappy with the features being produced, hence their regulation of the new process. In a later segment of *Film as Art* (p.174), Arnheim expresses that “Monochrome is no essential characteristic of the cinema.”, suggesting a change in view towards colour filmmaking, with this switch of perspective potentially being due to the fact that as more colour films were made in the years prior to his latter statement, filmmakers were developing better ways of filming in colour, utilising shadows in ways more fitting to a non-monochrome production, such as in *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (Hathaway, 1936).

Excluding Dorothy’s “Over the Rainbow” song, the scenes in Kansas are grounded in a, somewhat exaggerated, reality, with a clear narrative example the antagonistic force being an old woman wanting the protagonist’s dog put down, instead of an evil witch wanting to steal magical slippers. The colour scheme reflects this choice with the sepia tone, as established prior, being the accepted colour tone to a 1930’s moviegoing audience to represent the

colours of reality. It is in this way that *The Wizard of Oz* uses the sepia tone to portray Kansas as the realist section of the film, whereas Oz, despite the fact that it uses a wider variety of colours that are closer to the colours the audience would see in real life, albeit exaggerated, is the formalist part of the film. The crew of *The Wizard of Oz* has highly manipulated the set of Oz, to create a fantastical world of visual wonder that lies in stark contrast to the dull, realistic portrayal of Kansas. As the majority of the action also takes place within Oz, the usage of colour has further enhanced the stakes, and thus the audience's emotional responses, of the film. As Jones (1935) states on the use of colour within cinema "Colour enlarges drama, supports it, enhances it, actually impels it, becomes an organic part of it.", *The Wizard of Oz* was able to strengthen the narrative and the characters through the very means that Jones suggests.

However, the use of colour did not just stop at the production phase but also played a part in the promotion of the film as well. Many of the film's theatrical posters would promote the use of Technicolor as a selling point (MGM, 1939) and would use a variety of colours in the poster itself. While *The Wizard of Oz* was not the first film to promote its use of Technicolor, with that honour going to *The Black Pirate* (Parker, 1926), it further promotes the idea that MGM knew the use of colour was going to be a significant selling point to the American audiences. Various other degrees of marketing were also employed to further push the film and, Gerald Clarke (2000, p.102) states that at the premiere of *The Wizard of Oz* at Loew's Capitol Theatre "By nine-ten every one of the Capitol's five thousand seats was occupied, and perhaps ten thousand more people were waiting outside". Although the film was not a large box office success, grossing $3.017 million on a budget, including distribution and promotion, of an estimated $4 million (Clarke, 2000, p.104), it was still popular and its loss can be, at least partially, attributed to the average ticket price for children, the target audience

for the film, being considerably less than adult tickets (King, 2013). However, the film was still a critical success, John C. Flinn wrote for *Variety* (1939) "Some of the scenic passages are so beautiful in design and composition as to stir audiences by their sheer unfoldment." And *The Hollywood Reporter* (2021) stated in a contemporary review "Costuming, special effects and photography add embellishing touches which further clinch the picture's claims to highly significant achievement.", with these reviews making it clear that to the audience of the time, the visuals of *The Wizard of Oz* were a highly impactful part of the film.

The Wizard of Oz had many elements that made it a critical success and, upon theatrical re-releases and television airings, an eventual financial success. Judy Garland had recently starred in *Love Finds Andy Hardy* (Seltz, 1938) which had been a financial hit (Eyman, 2005, p.325), the rest of the actors were already known either through film or theatre work, it had an award-winning soundtrack that was composed by Harold Arlen and it was an adaptation of an already successful series of children's books that had started decades prior. However, some of the most famous aspects of the film are its colourful visuals, such as the yellow brick road or Dorothy's ruby slippers, with the slippers being considered some of the most valuable pieces of movie memorabilia in history (Burke, 2008). MGM's consideration of how to best complement the Technicolor cameras, through picking the right shade of yellow for the famous brick road (Clarke, 2000, p.94) and both the colour and material of the slippers being chosen to accommodate the extremely bright lighting needed for the Technicolor cameras (Thomas, 1988), show the forethought of how colour would be an impactful part of the film and work as a clear demonstration of how the use of colour within the studio productions could benefit them greatly, especially with the current knowledge of how the colour would be such a memorable part of *The Wizard of Oz*.

The Accessibility of Colour

The Wizard of Oz was an extremely ambitious film for MGM, as it was their most expensive and time-consuming film that year and was a film made to capitalise on the success of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Hand, 1937), by producing their own fantasy film for children. With the Technicolor successes of both *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *The Wizard of Oz,* along with Warner Bros. Pictures production *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Curtiz & Keighley, 1938) and the Selznick International Pictures and MGM co-production *Gone with the Wind* (Fleming, 1939), which were both financial and critical hits, studios were beginning to have more faith in the new processes. With more demand, Technicolor released two new film stocks, one in 1939 which was first used for *Gone with the Wind*, and one in 1941 called Technicolor Monopack (Cook, 1996, p.220), which was used for short sequences but later feature films, with the first being *Thunderhead, Son of Flicka* (King, 1945).

With these proven successes, the output of Technicolor films from major studios increased, however, due to the large costs of the colour film, the high amount of electricity needed for lighting and the additional costs of hiring the Technicolor consultants, smaller studios were not able to afford the expenses needed to film in Technicolor. With the majors already using techniques such as block booking and blind bidding, having the advantage of being on the forefront of colour films only made it more likely that their films would be watched over the films of smaller independent studios. In essence, the majors had a de-facto monopoly on colour filmmaking due to the demands and expenses of Technicolor, with no non-major studios, apart from Disney, producing a film using Technicolor in the 1940's until the Eagle-Lion production *The Big Cat* (Karlson, 1949). With greater accessibility, the majors also used Technicolor in their marketing, with films such as *My Friend Flicka* (Schuster, 1943) and

Meet Me in St. Louis (Minnelli, 1944) promoting their use of Technicolor on their posters. With a larger budget to put towards marketing than smaller studios coupled with the eye-catching visuals that a production in Technicolor could provide, films that were produced by the majors had an even greater guarantee that their films would be seen, especially as the vivid colours could heighten the emotions of films belonging to certain genres, with MGM musicals, such as the aforementioned *The Wizard of Oz* and *Meet Me in St. Louis*, utilising Technicolor to provide striking visuals.

However, in 1947, the Technicolor Corporation and Eastman Kodak, were brought to trial by the Justice Department for an antitrust suit, as the two companies were accused of the monopolisation of colour cinematography (United States v. Technicolor Inc., 1948). Eventually settled in 1950, the Justice Department ordered the companies to allow smaller companies use of the three-strip colours. The same year, the Eastman Kodak Company introduced their new single-strip process, Eastmancolor. This process combined Eastman Kodak's former process, known for its clear image quality, with the German Agfacolor process, which was an extremely low-cost film stock with no need for specialised equipment (Cook, 1996, p.388). As a result, Eastmancolor was the highest quality film stock while also being the lowest cost, quickly becoming an industry favourite. Technicolor was soon replaced, with *Foxfire* (Pevney, 1955) being the last American produced film to use Technicolor, and Eastmancolor became the standard for decades.

Due to the anti-trust suit, colour was now far more accessible to studios, both minor and major and the output of colour films was quickly increasing. However, the average weekly cinema attendance had started to decline by the late 1940's (Cowden, 2015) and the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled that the majors were in violation of anti-trust laws in what would be

later known as the Paramount Decree. This resulted in the studios having to remove their theatres over the next five years in order to stop them from being vertically integrated and having a monopoly on the American film industry (Balio, 1985, p.403). With no guaranteed distribution for the studios, they would now have to be selective with which screenplays they produced and, as a result, their quantity of production decreased. With a greater accessibility of colour and theatres no longer having their programmes be mainly productions from the major studios, independent productions were able to have a greater chance at success. Competition with television had also further incentivised Hollywood production companies to further use colour, in order to have an advantage over the competition. By 1958, 65% of the features in Hollywood were independent productions and by 1970, 94% of American features were in colour (Cook, 1996, p.389), a percentage that had escalated in order to compete against the rising popularity of television.

With the developing techniques produced by the Technicolor Corporation, the interest in colour film only grew as more audiences got the opportunity to witness films that utilised this technology. As a result, films such as *The Ten Commandments* (DeMille, 1923) and *Flowers and Tress* (Gillett, 1932) which utilised Technicolor processes, were successful, financially and critically. This encouraged the other studios to also experiment with colour films. The profits that these later films made were a further source of motivation for the majors who were able to afford the cameras and Technicolor operators which the company insisted upon. This, in turn, gave them an advantage over the independent studios who could not afford to decrease their already slim profit margins anymore. The use of colour was able to support new films through the narrative reasons by using colour symbolism, it could provide more visuals that were pleasing to the eye, and it gave the studios another aspect of their films that could be marketed over the films of others. It was in this way that the advancement of colour

technology was used to further continue the survival of the studio system as they were able to use their wealth to be on the forefront of new technologies that, with successive productions, they grew in confidence and ambition with. While technologies helped to keep the Hollywood Studio System alive, one of the most significant parts was the studios relationship with the Hollywood stars.

The Star System

The Hollywood Studio System, as discussed prior, had many methods of keeping their position at the top stable and secure throughout the first half of the 20th century. However, one of the key processes that they used was the star system. The star system was a method where the studios utilised the public persona of a star as a marketing tool, building films around the actors and actresses' reputations and keeping their reputations clean in order to preserve the conservative beliefs placed upon the stars. However, this system, while extremely beneficial to the studios, gave the stars a lack of control when it came to their private lives, as anything that went against their crafted personas which was caught by tabloids, could result in the stars being suspended from their contracts without pay. In a similar way, if a star did not want to do a role that the studio insisted, then it could also result in a suspension for that star. The degree of control that studios could exert over the private lives of the stars was extreme and was all increase annual revenue and ensure that their oligopoly would remain stable for the foreseeable future.

As cinema was still developing as a medium, actors were rarely credited due to the fact that they were not recognisable enough to market as they did not perform in productions regularly and the more recognisable ones may have not wanted crediting due to the fact that they were no longer able to use "their prime artistic resource, their voice" (Shickel, 1973, p.27) . However, as studios began to sign actors to longer contracts and thus more productions, audiences began to recognise them and, due to the lack of credited names, gave them nicknames (Bordwell & Thompson, 2009, p.30). As their image grew, the studios began to realise that using their fame as a marketing tool could entice more people into watching their productions. In 1910, a rumour was spread by the founder of Independent Moving Pictures,

later known as Universal, Carl Laemmle, that Florence Lawrence, known at the time as the Biograph Girl, had been killed in a car accident. Laemmle proceeded to use this rumour to cast Lawrence in the lead of one of his company's productions, instead of the rival company, Biograph (Hutchinson, 2016). Laemmle was able to use the public's knowledge of Lawrence offensively, strengthening his own company and weakening his competition, setting a future precedent for how the majors could use the perception of stars to their strengths. Carl Laemmle would even state that movie stars were "the fundamental thing" when it came to the film industry (Lewis, 2008, p.46).

One of the earliest stars in Old Hollywood was Mary Pickford. Her first film acting credit was for the short film *Their First Misunderstanding* (Ince & Tucker, 1911) and two years later, she was the main lead for the feature *In the Bishop's Carriage* (Dawley & Porter, 1913). Like other actors and actresses working for Biograph, Pickford was not named in the credits, so instead she was nicknamed by fans as the Girl with the Golden Curls (Golden Silents, 2020). Pickford returned to the stage briefly, only to later return to Hollywood, working for Adolph Zukor's Paramount (Wu, 2010, p.86). She is significant in the star system for how she was able to successfully build her career in Hollywood by utilising her popularity amongst audiences. In 1908, she was earning $5 a week and in five years, she was on a salary of $2,000 a week (Lewis, 2008, p.48). Pickford would later become one of the founders of United Artists, alongside other big stars such as Charlie Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks (Maltby, 2003, p.121), further securing her place in Old Hollywood and becoming one of the most iconic female stars of the Golden Age.

The stars of Old Hollywood were under long-term contracts, ensuring their loyalty to a certain studio, with the loss of pay acting as leverage to stop stars from refusing roles that the

studio deemed appropriate (Maltby, 2003, p.142). Under these contracts, stars could be seen as “a form of capital possessed by the studios” and as “a guarantee, or a promise, against loss on investment and even profit on it.” (Dyer, 1998, pp.10-11). This was due to the fact that stars were the most visible part of a production to the general public and, as a result, their reputation was key to the success of themselves and the productions. To place a star under contract, studios would employ talent scouts, who would attend entertainment venues such as nightclubs and theatres, where they would look for new talent. If a potential star was discovered, they would be given screen tests and placed into a six month probation contract with a weekly starting salary that would be capped at $250 (Mcdonald, 2000, p.43). During this period, the stars would be trained to be ready for Hollywood. This would include dialect lessons to develop accents better suited for the screen (Rathe, 2020) or working on an image that would better complement their on-screen persona. By placing stars under these contracts, it gave the studios a lot of power in making sure the stars did as they were told and created a financial opportunity that could be gained by cooperation with other studios. If a star was famous and well liked, then their economic value would be high. This would mean that if a studio wanted to cast a star that belonged to another studio in one of their productions, then they could be loaned to them for a higher cost. Both studios would benefit from this deal as the one receiving the star would be able to use that star for their production which could then be used to further promote their film, meanwhile the other studio would receive a sum of money and have their star’s value be further increased, if the film was high quality, by starring in a production that they did not fund themselves. While competition was a key factor of the Hollywood Studio System, so too was cooperation, especially amongst the majors, where cooperation would only further ensure their position as an oligopoly would remain secure. In the case of MGM loaning Clark Gable to Columbia, for the feature *It Happened One Night* (Capra, 1934), MGM received $2500 a week from Columbia (Harris,

2002, p.113). The film would become one of Columbia's biggest financial successes (McBride, 1992, p.309) and become the first film to win the Big Five Academy Awards, with one of these awards including Best Actor for Clark Gable. Through this cooperation and utilisation of the star system, both Columbia and MGM were able to benefit greatly. Gable's career also profited from the loan, as he became one of the highest performing actors in the box office for the next decade (Shipman, 1979. p.223). Cases such as *It Happened One Night* are key in understanding why the star system was a vital part of the infrastructure of the Hollywood Studio System. The two majors involved had returns on their financial investments and a star that was already under contract had his career skyrocket, with Gable later being nicknamed as the 'King of Hollywood'.

With reputation being a key element of the stars that were placed under contract, the studios were very conscious of which roles to cast their biggest stars in, usually they would be cast in productions that would play to their talents, or as Dyer states "Stories might be written expressly to feature a given star" (2009, p.62), with these productions being also known as star vehicles, an example of one being Judy Garland's frequent casting in films such as *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939) which could use her skill at singing, or *Love Finds Andy Hardy* (Seltz, 1938), with her 'girl-next-door' persona being used to strengthen the film. Hollywood stars were also aware of how crucial their image was for their success, with Mary Pickford leaving Biograph after she refused to do a role that would portray her in a more sexual way, breaking the child-like persona that had been crafted throughout her early career (Nicholson, 2019). The image of the stars could also be used in other business-oriented ways, such as company tie-ins and product placements in films. As magazines of the time's target audience were predominantly women, female stars were often used for celebrity endorsements of products aimed at women, such as make-up. For *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Minnelli, 1944), Judy

Garland promoted Woodbury powder (Screenland, 1944, p.29) and Ann Sheridan, while promoting *Steel Town* (Sherman, 1952), would also endorse Lux soap (Screenland, 1952, p.75), within the same advertisement. Fans of the stars could then use the images of the stars in the magazines to copy their style, or they could watch the movies that these stars were promoting to see these styles in motion. The more stars were used to promote products, such as clothing or make-up, the more Hollywood would be seen, as Dyer states, "as the arbiter of fashion." (1998, p.38). The image of the stars also encouraged fan-made publications such as the magazine Photoplay, which was established in 1911 and was given access by the studios to the sanitised version of the star's lives (Hutchinson, 2016). By sharing insider knowledge but presenting it through the guise of the moviegoing public, Photoplay was able to develop a parasocial relationship between the fans and the stars, with this relationship then being harnessed by the studios for financial gain, whether it was promoting a new production, doing damage control on any scandals involving the stars or marketing the previously mentioned endorsements in the pages of the magazine, it was clear that by cooperating with fan magazines, the studios could gain a lot. However, this system was reliant on a few factors that all related to the image of the stars. Their appearance, their reputation and their films, which the studios took great care in maintaining.

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer had a large studio that covered 167 acres, with many different facilities and services, such as a dentistry, electrical plant and police force, the latter of which was made up of fifty officers. The police force was central to MGM's ability of keeping the stars under their contracts with a clean reputation, as Scott Eyman states "No matter what an MGM actor did, police chief Whitey Hendry had to beat the local police to the scene" (2005, pp.1-2) Howard Strickling, the head of MGM's publicity department, Whitey Hendry and controversial District Attorney Buron Fitts were all instrumental in ensuring that criminal

activities were kept secret from the public (Clarke, 2000, p.66). This process was not limited to just MGM, with other studios also keeping the public in the unknown about the proclivities of their stars. One of the most infamous scandals was the death of Paul Bern in 1932, a producer and director who worked for MGM. Labelled a suicide at the time (Fleming, 2009, p.255), MGM producer Samuel Marx published his book, *Deadly Illusions: Jean Harlow and the Murder of Paul Bern* (1990), in which he proposed his theory that Bern had been murdered by his ex-partner, Dorothy Millette, which had then been covered up by Irving Thalberg. It is still unknown to this day whether Bern had committed suicide or was murdered, but Marx suggests that by having the death ruled a suicide, it would have been less of a scandal, thus not damaging the reputation of rising MGM star and wife of Paul Bern, Jean Harlow. If Harlow's reputation was damaged, then MGM would not be able to use the star as a marketing tool. Due to the star system, Harlow had further conditions in her contract, such as not being allowed to marry. During an affair, Harlow became pregnant and, after telling Howard Strickling, had an abortion, unknown to the general public (Bianco & Johns, 2016). In a similar fashion, while married to David Rose, Judy Garland became pregnant and her mother, Ethel, in collaboration with MGM, arranged for Garland to have an abortion. Two years later, Garland was once again made to have an abortion by Howard Strickling (Bianco & Johns, 2016). The encouragement for female stars to have abortions despite them being controversial in the early half of the 20th century was for a variety of reasons that would alternate on a case by case basis, whether it was to cover up evidence of affairs, such as with Harlow, or to preserve the star's image as a girl next door, as the case was for Garland's first abortion. However, the reasons ultimately were there to further ensure the reputation of the stars was kept clean, so that they could be further used to create greater revenue for the Hollywood studio system.

The physical appearance of stars was a key part of the star system as well, especially for the actresses who, as mentioned prior, would promote beauty products to the public. As such, they had an extreme amount of physical demands placed upon them that could do irreparable damage to both their body and mind. For the actresses of Hollywood, they were required to be thin, in order to appear more glamorous. However, Judy Garland was overweight compared to the desired standards for MGM, which resulted in various methods to alter her physical appearance. Still at a young age, Garland was placed onto a diet that consisted of "only black coffee and chicken soup, plus 80 cigarettes a day and pills every four hours." (Wilson, 2014), with the pills that she was ordered to take being amphetamine-based, which were commonplace in Old Hollywood for reasons such as, greater energy, concentration or dieting (Clarke, 2000, p.84). As a result of taking these stimulants in order to lose weight, Garland also experienced side-effects such as giggling, which would result in her being slapped by Victor Fleming on the set of *The Wizard of Oz* after laughing during a take (Clarke, 2000, p.98). Garland was not the only one prescribed amphetamines to prevent weight loss, with, among many more, actress Joanna Moore also being subjected to this treatment (Blakemore, 2019). As a result of the heavy amphetamine use, Garland's work also began to suffer, resulting in delays of filming which would result in the budget being increased against the studio's wishes. *Summer Stock* (Walters, 1950) would be Garland's last film for MGM after she was fired from *Royal Wedding* (Donen, 1951) for missing hours of filming (Clarke, 2000, p.271). Through the treatment of Judy Garland's weight through drugs, it can be seen how the studios, or in this specific case MGM, exploited the physical appearance of their stars so that they could better use them as a marketing tool, promoting their films as well as gaining financially from tie-ins with products.

However, it was not just the physical appearance of stars that concerned studios, it was what their character represented. Actors and actresses alike were often cast in roles and films that were expected of them. Garland was cast in 'girl next door' roles, Pickford in roles that had her play a child and Katharine Hepburn as the opposite, playing characters of sophistication. Male actors were often type cast as well, although not to the same degree, with most famous actors being cast as good-looking gentleman, such as Cary Grant or Tony Curtis. Taking on roles that went against these archetypes was often met with disapproval by the studios as they had been crafted with care into how best to market the stars. It was due to this that star vehicles were an essential asset of the star system, as audiences knew what to expect when they watched a certain star's films. In the case of Douglas Fairbanks, he initially started his career with comedy films such as *His Picture in the Papers* (Emerson, 1916) and *The Habit of Happiness* (Dwan, 1916), however his career transitioned with his starring role in *The Mark of Zorro* (Niblo, 1920), where he instead became known for starring in adventure films (Vance, 2008, p.93). As a result of this transition, Fairbanks escaped from being consistently placed in comedies, but instead became known as, and still is, as an adventure star, finding success in productions such as *Robin Hood* (Dwan, 1922) and *The Thief of Bagdad* (Walsh, 1924). The transition from comedies, especially silent comedies, to the adventure genre was likely made easier due to the fact that both were reliant on athletic ability, which Fairbanks was known for (Vance, 2008, pp. 162-163). Switching genres also was able to benefit Fairbanks by having a more mature genre of film as he himself grew older, being 37 years old upon the release of *The Mark of Zorro.* However, some stars were less successful in transitioning, such as actress Mae Murray starring in *Peacock Alley* (Sano, 1930), a sound remake of the silent film of the same name (Leonard, 1922). With her already declining after being unofficially blacklisted in Hollywood after breaking her contract with MGM (Donnelly, 2016), *Peacock Alley* was intended to help Murray re-enter the spotlight in her

sound debut. However, the film instead received negative reviews, with Murray's performance also receiving criticism (Kreuger, 1975, p.163). Murray would star in two more sound films, before retiring from the Hollywood film industry. With an unofficial blacklist and the transition from silent to sound, Murray's sound debut being received negatively further cemented the end of her career.

With the studios taking great care to maintain the reputation, appearance and symbol of the stars, one of the greater threats to the star system was journalism. With those involved within the Hollywood film industry becoming involved in various scandals, the chances of it being leaked by tabloids only increased with each successive scandal. While it was not a leak, the infamous case of Clara Bow's autobiographical story in Photoplay (Bow, 1928) was scandalous due to it revealing details about her life that was uncommon for stars to share at the time. Another infamous tabloid case was that of Rosoce 'Fatty' Arbuckle, who was accused of raping actress Virginia Rappe, which led to her death. After three trials, Arbuckle was found not guilty of rape or manslaughter by the jury (Sheerin, 2011), however the case was fundamental in breaking the concept that all stars are infallible, with the journalists at the time also reporting that Arbuckle had used different penetrative objects on Rappe (Hopkins, 1921, p.3). The outcry from the public that had only been encouraged by the news of the time led to Arbuckle being cast in less film roles. This was due to the fact that, despite being a beloved star prior to the scandal, his name and image had been tainted by the scandal and if a studio had him in one of their productions, it would decrease the chances of a high box office revenue significantly. Even in other countries, his name only reminded people of the scandal, with one of his comeback productions, *Hey, Pop!* (Goulding, 1932), not being granted an exhibition certificate in the United Kingdom by the British Board of Film Censors, with the controversy being listed as a reason, eleven years after it occurred (Liebman, 1998, p.5). It

was clear that the studios understood that Arbuckle's reputation had been too damaged by the accusations and that one of the few ways to ensure that their annual profits did not decrease and that the other stars had their reputations remain clean, was to cut Arbuckle out of the Hollywood film industry. Losing a high-profile star who had made money for the studios shows why the majors wanted to ensure the reputation of their stars remained clean and scandal-free, furthermore it shows the degree of control that journalism could exert over the studios. The sensationalist and shocking case of Arbuckle resulted in a large amount of newspapers being sold, proving an interest in the public on the scandals of the stars. In an attempt to prevent more scandals, morality clauses were quickly introduced into the star's contracts, with the desire that if more controversies were avoided, journalists could not expose the Hollywood secrets, the public would continue to have a good impression of the icons they see on silver screen and will thus watch their films and buy the products they endorse.

Morality clauses were a significant part of the contracts involved for Old Hollywood stars and, as Universal stated in 1921, "Anything tending to degrade you in society or bring you into public hatred, contempt, scorn or ridicule, or tending to shock, insult or offend the community or outrage public morals or decency." (Moore, 2018). While morality clauses were essentially a response from Universal, and other studios, to the Roscoe Arbuckle scandal, the vagueness of the clause also gave the studios significant freedom in what they could deem as immoral behaviour. In the first half of 20th Century America, what could be constituted as immoral could range between illegal behaviour, such as partaking in illegal substances, to behaviour that was not considered 'decent', such as having children out of wedlock or extra-marital affairs. As previously mentioned, Jean Harlow had an abortion after becoming pregnant from an extra-marital affair and Judy Garland's second abortion was also

a result of her becoming pregnant from an affair that she had with Tyrone Power (Bianco & Johns, 2016). While a breaking of the morality clause could result in either suspension of pay or a termination of their contracts, Harlow & Garland did not receive financial punishments as one of the key elements concerning the morality clauses was the focus on the public's perception. While the wording of the clause is purposefully vague, it is clear that what concerned the studios most is if the public discovered the immoral behaviour, not if the stars partook in it. It was through this that people such as MGM executives Eddie Mannix and the previously mentioned Howard Strickling were key, covering up scandals that would create negative press in a similar vein to that of the Roscoe Arbuckle case. Whether it was organising secret abortions to hide pregnancies, arranging faux-marriages or relationships to dispel rumours of homosexual stars and allegedly covering up homicides, the Arbuckle case's subsequent morality clauses did little to dispel the behaviour and was more of an encouragement to stars to contact the studio executives before anybody else.

The star system was integral to the Hollywood Studio System, but in the early 1950's it was broken down as the studio system came to an end. With the rise in popularity of television, the number of people in the United States attending the cinema weekly quickly declined (Cowden, 2015) and the studios were still feeling the effects of the Paramount Decree and the loss of their ability to be vertically integrated. As such, cuts in costs were needed, with the contracted stars being seen as an expensive overhead. With this in mind, the way that studios would hire actors was changed in a way that would cut down on the costs. Instead of locking them into long-term contracts, they would instead be hired as freelancers, to work for individual projects (Mcdonald, 2000, p.70). While this gave the stars more freedom to pursue projects that they wanted, it also gave them less security if their popularity in the box office dropped and also meant that the studios no longer had the same incentive to keep the

reputations of their stars clean. However, to this day stars are still used as a promotional tool for films and the reputation of individual stars can still affect a film's overall box office gross.

The increased presence of stars and the concept of stardom was a key part of the Hollywood Studio System's continued survival throughout the Golden Age of Hollywood. The financial profit to be made by cultivating a star's image in order to represent them in a way that would be loved by the masses was a great encouragement to the studios to further invest in them. By placing the actors and actresses under long-term contracts and using pay as leverage, the majors were able to ensure that the stars remained loyal and committed to preserving the status quo of the studio system. Both ethically and legally, the methods used by the studio executives to keep the star's reputations clean was done to ensure that they were able to cash in on the star's image for as long as they potentially could. If it was clear that a star was no longer as much of a financial draw, such as Roscoe 'Fatty' Arbuckle or Mae Murray, then they would not be seen as worth the investment in the eyes of the studios. On the other side of the spectrum, the stars who could draw in the crowds at the box office were seen as worthy of investment. To the studios, stars such as Judy Garland and Jean Harlow were worth committing ethically questionable actions as they were still providing the studios with income, whether it was through the promotion of beauty products or using their names and images to market their films. In essence, the star system was a method used by the studios to increase their revenue and the stars were the tools required to keep the process running. Once it became clear that investing in stardom would be too costly for the changing industry, the studios were quick to readjust so that they could keep their profit margins as high as they potentially could.

The Focus on Genre

From the very beginning of cinema to the present day, narrative has been one of the most significant parts of film and, as a result, so has genre. Throughout history, the popularity of certain genres has fluctuated, growing and declining in popularity. To examine the culture of the decades when certain genres were at their peak popularity, it can be understood how the studios were able to identify the socio-political state of the United States to support their productions and further ensure that their position remained stable.

As mentioned earlier, the development of sound technology and the eventual standardisation of sound led to the birth of the musical genre. Alan Crosland's *The Jazz Singer* (1927) and Harry Beaumont's *The Broadway Melody* (1929) are two early examples of films that can be categorised in the musical genre. However, the musical genre's roots go further back, with the De Forest Phonofilm Company and Vitaphone producing musical shorts prior. The 1920's, alternatively known as the 'Roaring Twenties' or the 'Jazz Age', was a decade notable for various aspects, however, of relevance was the nation's love of music. By the end of the 1920's there were radios in over 12 million American homes, there was a car for every five Americans and dances such as the Charleston and the Cake Walk rose in popularity. The United States was also experiencing an economic boom due to factors such as mass-consumerism and mass production, which meant that more Americans had the disposable income to spend on consumerist goods, i.e., radios and cinema tickets (History, 2010). With the music industry seeing a rise in popularity and sound systems being consistently improved, the idea of combining film and music was more enticing to those with a financial stake in sound systems, such as De Forest or the Warners. This led to the De Forest Phonofilm Company and Vitaphone's musical shorts which proved popular to audiences (Cook, 1996,

p.207), although not as popular to the studios, who were currently still living off the successes of their silent films, which had not yet been disrupted by the emergence of sound films. However, with the financial successes of *The Jazz Singer, Gold Diggers of Broadway* (Ruth, 1929) and *The Broadway Melody*, it became clear that the pairing of music and film was worth pursuing for the majors and the musical was the perfect genre for this combination.

Walt Disney Productions & The Musical Genre

Inspired by the success of *The Jazz Singer*, Walt Disney's third short involving Mickey Mouse, *Steamboat Willie* (Disney & Iwerks, 1928), utilised a synchronised soundtrack. The critical and commercial success of the short made Walt Disney and the character of Mickey Mouse famous, with Walt Disney Productions continuing the success of *Steamboat Willie* with a series of synchronised Mickey Mouse short films, with the prior two shorts *The Gallopin' Gaucho* (Iwerks, 1928) and *Plane Crazy* (Disney & Iwerks, 1929) being reworked to incorporate synchronised sound. Alongside the Mickey Mouse series of shorts, Walt Disney Productions also began a series of shorts titled Silly Symphonies, which would begin with *The Skeleton Dance* (Disney, 1929). The Silly Symphonies series, and by extension *The Skeleton Dance*, followed the idea that had been put into practice with *Steamboat Willie*, of combining a synchronised soundtrack with animation. Furthermore, as the Silly Symphonies series grew in popularity and continued as a series, various other techniques were put into practice, such as Technicolor's three-strip process in *Flowers and Trees* (Gillett, 1932). While different techniques and advancements in animation were utilised throughout the series, what remained constant was the synchronised soundtrack. What Silly Symphonies did

was give Walt Disney Productions practice in animation for their first feature film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Hand, 1937).

Adaptations are an uncommon practice, and this has been true since the early days of cinema as well, with *Frankenstein* (Dawley, 1910), Greed (Stroheim, 1924) and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Turner, 1910) all being early examples of films of literary works being put to screen, albeit with numerous changes to their respective source materials. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was no exception, taking the original source material (Grimm & Grimm, 1812) and changing the narrative to make it more appealing to the audience. Despite being based on a well-known fairy tale, being the first feature film of a studio that had been quickly building a positive reputation and being all in Technicolor, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was still considered a huge risk for Walt Disney Productions and Walt Disney himself, with the film being nicknamed "Disney's Folly" by those involved in the film industry (Thomas, 1994, p.139). With a final budget of $1.48 million (Barrier, 1999, p.229), the film, in its initial theatrical run, earned a total box office gross of $7.8 million (Maltin, 1987, p.57). With the re-release in 1987, the feature had grossed $375 million (Brower & Wilhelm, 1993, p.359) and, when adjusted for inflation, is one of the highest grossing films of all time (Lambie, 2019). Championed as one of the greatest films, animated or not, of all time, the success of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is hard to dispute, influencing both the film industry and the public, with the film acting as an inspiration for film such as *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939) and giving birth to the Disney Princess multi-media franchise.

The success of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* can be attributed to many factors, such as the previously mentioned established reputation of Disney, the fact that it was produced in Technicolor and that it was an adaptation of a Brothers Grimm fairy tale. However, while

lauded for its narrative and visuals, the sound was of equal importance. Songs featured in the film, such as “Heigh Ho, It’s Off to Work We Go” and “Whistle While You Work” would be played on the radio (Thomas, 1994, p.143). As sound had become a standardised part of cinema by this point, the feature contained multiple songs, sound effects and dialogue. With Walt Disney Productions having found former success with the Silly Symphonies, the decision to have *Snow White* be a musical was likely built on the idea that if a musical focus had proven successful for the Silly Symphonies, then it would work for their feature as well. The success of *Snow White* would in turn set a precedent for future Walt Disney Productions, that the vast majority of them would be musicals. The next two features produced by the company would be *Pinocchio* (Luske & Sharpsteen, 1940) and *Fantasia* (Grant & Huemer, 1940). *Pinocchio*, in terms of the other musicals produced by Walt Disney Productions, was more conventional with diegetic musical numbers placed throughout the film. In contrast, *Fantasia* took a more unconventional approach to the Hollywood musicals that were popular at the time. The narrative of *Fantasia* is more anthological, depicting a series of vignettes with no clear narrative link. Instead, *Fantasia* was produced as an experimental pairing of animation and musical, specifically classical, and the visuals and performance of the orchestras were designed to reflect that. Botb *Pinocchio* and *Fantasia* were financial disappointments, leaving Walt Disney Productions in an economic crisis (Barrier, 2007, p.168). The two features underperforming at the box office can be attributed to a few reasons, such as the Second World War affecting international markets, such as in Europe. However, of the two, *Pinocchio* performed the best financially, with certain factors at play such as it being more clearly aimed for children, based on a previous work and the fact that, compared to *Fantasia, Pinocchio* was a conventional musical, in that it followed a more traditional three-act narrative with the songs interwoven throughout.

The Musical Genre and its Sense of Escapism

The musical genre was thriving throughout the late 1930's and would continue throughout the 1940's and 1950's, with MGM becoming known for their foray into the Hollywood musical genre with films. A production unit helmed by Arthur Freed, a role he got after the critical success of *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939) developed multiple musicals throughout this time period, starting with *Babes in Arms* (Berkeley,1939) and *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Minnelli, 1944). The success of the musical genre throughout this time period, compared to later years where musicals decreased significantly in popularity, can be seen as a reflection of what the audiences wanted in films at the time. Throughout the 1930's, America was suffering through the Great Depression, drastically affecting the amount of disposable income that could be spent, which can be seen with the drop in cinema admissions between 1930 and 1934 (Cowden, 2015). The studios, as discussed prior, utilised different tactics to boost the cinema admissions, such as the conversion to sound and the increased number of Technicolor films. However, the Hollywood musical can also be seen as a key reason as to why cinema admissions began to steadily rise back up in the mid to late 1930's. Hollywood musicals would often have well-dressed actors, pleasing visuals and narratives that were unrelated to the financial woes experienced by the audiences of the time. Furthermore, the care-free nature of the characters breaking into song and dances would only increase the form of escapism experienced by the audiences more so. With the mental health of the average American deteriorating during the 1930's and the suicide rate in America reaching its highest recorded levels (MacBride, 2013), Hollywood musicals could provide Americans with a short-term relief, giving them a sense of escapism from the problems that they were experiencing outside of the theatre. With films such as *42nd Street* (Bacon, 1933), *Gold Diggers of 1933* (Berkeley & LeRoy, 1933) and *Footlight Parade* (Bacon & Berkeley, 1933)

performing well financially, it was clear to the studios that the audience's desire for escapism could be capitalised on by producing more musicals of a similar fashion.

With a clear market to be profited from, the studios responded by producing a large influx of musicals, with the popular Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers pairing originating in 1933 with *Flying Down to Rio* (Freeland) and continuing for several successful films produced by RKO. Disney would have their financial success with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and MGM would turn to musicals in the 1940's with the aforementioned Arthur Freed unit. While World War 2 started in 1939, America would not enter the war until the attack on the U.S. fleet stationed at Pearl Harbour in 1941. With America now involved in the Second World War, the escapism that Hollywood musicals had provided for the Great Depression was now used as escapism from the war, leading to the continued release of musicals throughout the 1940's, where MGM's musicals would continue to thrive whilst being produced by the Arthur Freed unit, with the average weekly cinema attendance in America peaking during the mid-1940's at 60% (Cowden, 2015) and the box office grosses of the musicals reflecting the demand by the audiences. Technicolor would become a standardised part of the Hollywood musical, with films such as *Meet Me in St. Louis* and *Easter Parade* (Walters, 1948). Other studios would also have high grossing musical productions, with Fox producing *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Hawks, 1953), Paramount's *White Christmas* (Curtiz, 1954) and the Warner Bros production, *A Star is Born* (Cukor, 1954) which had a large box office gross but failed due to its high budget (Arneel, 1956, p.1c). For the most part, it was clear that there was still money to be made in the musical genre and, while the other studios did produce musicals, it was effectively a genre dominated initially by RKO and, later into the Golden Age of Hollywood, MGM.

Decline of the Hollywood Musical

The musical genre was initially unaffected by the Paramount Decree, as many famous Hollywood musicals were produced in its wake, such as *Singin' in the Rain* (Donen & Kelly, 1952) and *The Sound of Music* (Wise, 1965). However, as the Paramount Decree had meant that the studios no longer had the financial security that the business practices such as block booking had given them. Now that studios had to be more careful, they could not rely on a genre if it was not providing them with the necessary funds to keep the system stable. It was during the 1960's that musicals became less popular with American audiences. While there still many successful musicals throughout this decade, with *West Side Story* (Robbins & Wise, 1961) and *Mary Poppins* (Stevenson, 1964) acting as two famous examples, there were also musicals that significantly underperformed, e.g., *Doctor Dolittle* (Fleischer, 1967) and *Hello, Dolly!* (Kelly, 1969). A significant factor towards the musical genre's decline in popularity was that, throughout the 1960's, rock music became a more popular genre, with artists, such as Elvis Presley, and bands, like The Beatles, that produced rock music becoming more popular. The rise of rock music can also be seen as a factor of the new youth culture and subcultures, such as greasers and hippies, cultures that Hollywood musicals are, on a fundamental basis, not appealing to. Greasers, a group often characterised as working-class ethnic youth (Moore, 2017, p.138), and hippies, characterised as anti-establishment and anti-materialistic youth (Dudley, 2000, p.193), had traits that were in direct opposition to the luxurious, high-fashion and conservative values of a traditional Hollywood musical. Additionally, America was steadily increasing its involvement in the Vietnam War throughout the 1960's, with its intervention being met with more resistance domestically than the Second World War due to moral or economic reasons. With the Vietnam War being reported on by journalists in the country and Americans getting information through different

forms of media such as television and newspapers, the escapism formerly provided by Hollywood musicals did not provide an adequate comfort. With the demand for the musical genre declining, so too did the output from the studios, recognising that other genres were quickly becoming more popular, especially films that targeted the new youth market, such as *Rebel Without a Cause* (Ray, 1955). While the musical genre diminished in popularity, it was a staple of Old Hollywood and was a key part of the studio system's survival, as it was a genre that proved to be reliable, consistently providing the studios with high box office grosses while also utilising the newly developed sound and colour systems.

The Western Genre

In a similar fashion to the musical genre, Westerns were a key genre throughout the Golden Age of Hollywood and while Westerns still are produced today, the 'Golden Age' of the genre can be placed in the 1940's and 1950's, with many being produced by various studios to high box office returns and acclaim. The roots of the Western can be traced as far back as 1899 with *Kidnapping by Indians* (Kenyon), a short which depicts a conventional Western narrative of a young woman being kidnapped by Native Americans. Furthermore, the short Western film *The Great Train Robbery* (Porter, 1903) has been stated as potentially the most popular film pre-1905 due to its extreme popularity (Bordwell & Thompson, 2009, p.21). While the novelty of shorts such as *The Great Train Robbery* being screened to a still fresh audience will have played a part in its success, the early interest in Westerns was undeniable, especially as it had already attracted audiences in other forms of media, e.g., literature.

It was in the late 1930's that the Western genre began to increase in popularity with films like *Dodge City* (Curtiz, 1939) and *Jesse James* (King, 1939) proving to be extremely attractive to

the audiences of the time, with *Dodge City* becoming Warner Bros. highest grossing film of 1939 (Behlmer, McCarthy & Thomas, 1969, p.80) and the latter production was rereleased multiple times due to its popularity (Variety, 1954, p.2a). That same year, Walter Wanger productions produced the film *Stagecoach* (Ford, 1939) and it was distributed by United Artists. While not as financially as the two previously mentioned features (Bernstein, 2000, p.439), *Stagecoach* has been extremely well-remembered since its release, influencing many other future films, with its mixed-background cast, narrative tropes that would become a staple of the genre and recurring themes. The pairing of director John Ford and actor John Wayne would also inspire future collaborations, with the two working together for 13 more productions, the majority of them were also in the Western genre (Ebert, 2011).

Stagecoach, *Jesse James* and *Dodge City* paved the way for the Golden Age of the Westerns, which, while slowly building up in the early 40's, started in the mid-40's or post-war America. For the next two decades, the Western genre would prove to be reliable when it came to the box office, with studios meeting the demand by consistently producing more. In the 1950's, the popularity of the genre peaked, with more Westerns being "produced outnumbered all other genres combined" (Indick, 2009, p.2). The Western genre's popularity in America could be seen as a mirror to the psyche of Americans of the time, especially male Americans. Often Western films would depict a male protagonist as hypermasculine, who is isolated from society or finds comfort in male companionship. This characterisation would likely be seen as relatable to former soldiers in the Second World War, who would bond with their fellow male soldiers and return from combat to their home, different from when they left (Lewis, 2008, p.248). While some Westerns can be considered as more ambiguously grey in terms of morals, the standard Western would often depict characters with clear cut, black and

white morality. This, coupled with the nostalgic idea of the Wild West as a 'simpler time', likely would provide comfort to the soldiers who had experienced the horrors of war.

The appeal of the Western would be further enhanced as studios, in an attempt to fight the growing threat of television, would produce more films in colour and utilise the advantage that the bigger screens had. The Western genre was one that had direct competition with television, with shows such as *Gunsmoke* (Warren, 1955-1975), *Cheyenne* (Huggins, 1955-1962) and *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp* (Edelman & Sisk, 1955-1961) proving to be extremely popular with audiences and many more Western television shows airing during this time period (Cahill, 2021). To ensure that the Western genre continued to be a reliable source of income for the studios, they adopted the technologies, hoping that the spectacle would work as a way of drawing in audiences. One notable Western that utilised both Technicolor and widescreen was *Shane* (Stevens, 1953), that, while premiering before *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp* introduced Western television shows to an adult audience, was still in competition with the rising popularity of television. *Shane* is considered not just a classic Western but a classic film too (AFI, 2007), influencing film such as *Pale Rider* (Eastwood, 1985) and *Logan* (Mangold, 2017). Contemporary critics also gave special praise to the visuals of the film, with Bosley Crowther for the New York Times stating that the film was "Beautifully filmed in Technicolor" (1953, p.30b) and cinematographer, Loyal Criggs, won the Academy Award for Best Cinematography in 1954. The film was not just a critical success, but also a financial one (Variety, 1954, p.2d), showing that audience interest in Westerns on the big screen was still ongoing.

Decline of the Westerns

However, by the 1960's, the Golden Age of the Westerns had come to an end. As noted previously, the Western genre dominated all the other genres being produced at the time (Indick, 2009, p.2) and with two decades of Westerns being continuously on theatre screens and, starting in the mid-50's, consistently on television (Cahill, 2021), it led to what Thomas Schatz describes as "a combination of market saturation and generic exhaustion" (2007). The generic exhaustion can be seen with what author Frank Gruber identified as the seven standard narratives for Westerns in his book, *The Pulp Jungle* (1967), in which a Western will follow one of the seven templates, albeit with changes inflicted by characterisation and dialogue. While a narrative being stripped into a template or formula is not a new concept, with Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) and his theory on the hero's journey preceding *The Pulp Jungle* by 18 years, Gruber's work identified the underlying problem with the Western genre, in that there was not much variety being explored on the foundational basis of the Western's narratives, a problem that would only become exacerbated by the genre's oversaturation. With an extreme number of Westerns features being produced and television airing a large amount of weekly Western television shows, the narrative templates that a standard Western would follow would only become clearer to a regular consumer of Western entertainment. As mentioned earlier, home ownership increased with the Federal Housing Administration encouraging the development of homes in the suburbs (Nicolaides & Wiese, 2017), which factored into the growing popularity of television as families who lived in the suburbs could view television from the comfort of their own homes instead of having to drive to the nearest theatre. Due to this, Western shows such as *Gunsmoke* and *Cheyenne* would continue to prove popular with audiences due to its accessibility and minimal cost, in comparison to feature films. Furthermore, if the rise of the

Western genre can be attributed to the psyche of Americans in the wake of World War Two, then the decline can also be seen as psychological response to the events that occurred in the 1960's.

While the end of the Second World War signalled the end of combat against the Axis powers, it also began America's conflict with the Soviet Union. With events in the 1950's such as the Korean War, the Soviet Union's increased development of nuclear bombs and the Soviet's launching of Sputnik, the Red Scare that was advocated by Senator Joseph McCarthy heightened tensions in the American household. The fears of the Soviet Union and the destruction that could be caused by nuclear weapons was only increased with media depicting the effects of such destruction, e.g., the films *Five* (Oboler, 1951), *Invasion, U.S.A.* (Green, 1952) and the short film *Duck and Cover!* (Rizzo, 1952) which was circulated around schools (Pruitt, 2019). While the Red Scare was seen as a threat by Americans, it was also seen as a single entity, the threat of communism. In a similar fashion to the black and white morals of the average Western, the early Cold War could be seen as good versus evil, capitalism versus communism, America against the Soviet Union. However, throughout the 1960's, this idea was disrupted through various events in America and the world.

While the Soviet Union was a single threat, events such as the assassination of John F. Kennedy by American Lee Harvey Oswald, the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's showed a more negative side of America that had previously been ignored by the post-war consumerist public. In parallel to the Vietnam War's influence on the decline of the musical genre, with the growing youth sub-cultures that stood in opposition with its values, the increased discontent over the American intervention in the war can be seen as a contributing factor towards the decline of the Western. A genre that

depicted violence and hypermasculine values clashed with the ideals of the various counterculture groups in America at the time. The changing culture of America and the competition that television brought to the Western genre played significant parts in the decline of the Western genre.

The Western genre's decline also resulted in its evolution, with films such as *The Wild Bunch* (Peckinpah, 1969), *A Fistful of Dollars* (Leone, 1964) and *El Topo* (Jodorowsky, 1970), as these films, while Westerns, also belonged to various sub-genres, namely Revisionist Westerns, Spaghetti Westerns and Acid Westerns. Significantly different from the older Westerns, their depiction of violence was more brutal than the former films and the character's morals were more questionable. From the 1960's to the modern day, Westerns are typically more violent and depict the Wild West as less-nostalgic and more dishonourable than the films that came before. Traditional Westerns were still produced by studios, such as Paramount Pictures' *True Grit* (Hathaway, 1969), but the demand for Westerns had significantly decreased since the 1950's and the studios reacted as such, producing less of the genre to instead focus on the genres that were proving to be more popular, i.e., dramas, thrillers and teen-aimed films.

The Benefits of Genres

With the success of early musicals and Westerns, it was common sense for the studios to increase the production of films in those genres. Business practices such as block booking and ownership of theatres ensured that the studios would have venues in which to exhibit their productions, but that was not a guarantee that their films would be watched. Similarly, technological developments such as the advancements in sound and colour could draw an

audience in, but it didn't mean that they would come in again. Whereas the demand for Westerns and musicals was a clear sign to the studios that they could get audiences and, as the box office successes of the early films in those genres showed, higher profits. The focus on these two genres also provided additional benefits to the studios. If an actor or actress who was a talented singer was under a contract with a studio, such as Judy Garland with MGM, then being able to use that skill repeatedly in various musicals would help increase revenue as it could be used as a marketing tool. Similarly, Western films could cut down on costs by their re-use of props, sets and locations, further increasing their profit margins.

Similarly, the focus on certain genres also worked in tandem with the Star System, as certain stars would become associated with the genres. John Wayne, Gary Cooper and Clint Eastwood would become names that were synonymous with the Western genre, while Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly and Ginger Rogers would become icons of the Old Hollywood musical. The association of certain stars with certain genres would play into the images crafted by the studios, with the three mentioned Western stars having the image of the "strong, silent type", where their masculinity and strength is portrayed through their lack of words (Hobbs, 2017). With stars portraying similar characters in the same genre, the studios were able to provide a familiarity to audiences, with the latter going into the theatre with a strong idea of what to expect. This was not isolated to just Westerns, with the actors in musicals often having the crafted image of being gentlemen. The depiction of men in musicals and Westerns can also be seen as broadening the appeal to the audience by portraying them in a traditionally conservative fashion, which would appeal to the wider public of the early 20th century who had more stereotypical ideas on gender roles.

The mass production of certain genres was also beneficial to others, not just the studios, in that it could provide stars regular roles that they felt comfortable with, allowed stars to play to their talents and crew members would be hired to work on similar productions. Set decorator Sydney Moore worked on *Flying Down to Rio* (Freeland, 1933), *Top Hat* (Sandrich, 1935) & *A Star is Born* (Wellman, 1937), Tyrus Wong worked in the art department for multiple Westerns, such as *Calamity Jane* (Butler, 1953), *How the West Was Won* (Ford, Hathaway, Marshall & Thorpe, 1962) and *Rio Bravo* (Hawks, 1959) and director John Ford would direct many Westerns, including famous works such as *Stagecoach*, *The Searchers* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (Ford, 1962). It was a system that was extremely beneficial to the studios, crew and the audiences, who were able to essentially pick which films were produced by the studios through which tickets they paid for.

It was in this way that the focusing on specific genres was able to benefit the Hollywood Studio System, as it was able to take previously discussed elements such as sound, colour and the star system and this amalgamation of different elements was able to elevate their products, producing musicals, creating stunning vistas for the Westerns and having actors play similar roles to bring a level of quality assurance to audiences. It was a business practice unlike ones such as block booking, vertical integration and blind bidding, as there was nothing ethically questionable about it, as it was a simple process of supply and demand, a process that most industries take part in. Even in the modern day, the film industry will meet audience's demands, with the superhero genre dominating the market since the early 2000's, with films such as *Avengers: Endgame* (Russo & Russo, 2019) and *Avengers: Infinity War* (Russo & Russo, 2018) grossing over $2 billion each (Bean, 2020). Director Steven Spielberg has even compared the current superhero genre to that of the Western, stating "There will be a time when the superhero movie goes the way of the Western" (McMillan, 2015). By

following American culture's trends and changing their output to properly accommodate the audiences, the studios were able to keep the Hollywood Studio System alive and ensure that their revenue stream was constant.

Conclusion

By observing the various factors that have been listed throughout the thesis, it can become evident how the major studios were able to keep the Hollywood Studio System to persist for this extended period of time even faced with competition from outside forces, whether it was the swiftly rising popularity of sound films or from other studios such as the First National Exhibitors Circuit, the wide variety of processes and techniques utilised by the studios helped to sustain the system throughout the Golden Age of Hollywood and ensure that their position at the top remained secure for the time being.

The processes used by the majors, such as vertical integration, block booking and blind bidding, while later deemed as practices that violated anti-trust laws in the United States v. Paramount case (United States v. Paramount, 1948), were a key part of keeping the Hollywood Studio System sustained. It was through these processes that the studios were able to ensure that all of their productions would have a form of exhibition, whether it was by essentially forcing potential exhibitors to purchase the less financially potential productions to receive the guaranteed money-makers (Koszarski, 1990, pp.71-72) or by construction or purchasing their own theatres (Bordwell & Thompson, 2009, p.129), the studios had exhibition available for all of their films and were therefore guaranteed to receive revenue. The practice of constructing more theatres helped to increase the revenue received as it also provided more of the United States population access to see the features produced, which in turn provided the studios with more funds in which they could acquire more theatres and entice audiences with higher production values. While the Paramount Decree put an end to vertical integration, block booking and blind bidding, the decades prior had given the studios sufficient time to position themselves at the top of the American film industry.

As discussed, it was not just the practices put in place by the majors that helped to sustain the Hollywood Studio System, but also the developments of different technologies. With Warner Bros. and Fox motivating the eventual standardisation of sound films through their releases, such as *The Jazz Singer* (Crosland, 1927) and the Fox Movietone programmes, the other Hollywood studios were forced to adopt this new technology. This acceptance of sound films proved to be extremely beneficial in many ways, leading to the birth of the musical genre, increasing the weekly cinema attendance and helping the Hollywood Studio System survive the financial problems that occurred to other industries due to the Wall Street Crash of 1929.

Furthermore, the increased developments in colour filmmaking, spearheaded by Technicolor, had many benefits for the major studios, providing more of a visual flair that helped to aid the idea of Hollywood films being spectacles, the use of colour could be used as a marketing tool and was one of the many advantages that cinema had over television as the latter rose in popularity. With the expenses that came with filming in colour, it also provided the majors a greater edge over the smaller studios, who did not have the necessary funds to freely spend on adopting colour technology. In regards to both the technological advancements of both sound and colour, the studios combination of innovation and standardisation was able to benefit them greatly, keeping their position in the studio system secure and remaining unthreatened from smaller studios usurping their place.

Finally, practices such as the star system and the mass production of specific genre films helped to further maintain the status quo established by the majors. The star system worked in that it was able to create parasocial relationships between the audiences and the crafted persona of the stars, which would help the studios as audiences would feel more inclined to

watch the films of a star that they like, which benefitted the studios who would have those stars under contract. The crafted images of the stars could also be further used to bring in additional money, through celebrity endorsements of products, a process which also helped to promote the productions that the stars were in. With the images created by the studios in mind, the mass production of genre was also to tie directly to it, with actors such as John Wayne and Gene Kelly becoming known respectively for Westerns and musicals. Genre films were able to play to the talents of the stars and, through association, made stars icons of certain genres. With an actor such as Gary Cooper starring in a Western, it also helped appeal to audiences due to the familiarity that the pairing brought, with that familiarity also acting as a sign of quality assurance. As a result, it gave studios greater confidence that a production of a genre, that consistently performs well, would also do well financially.

In conclusion, the factors that have been detailed throughout this thesis all played significant parts in keeping the Hollywood Studio System alive for such an extended period of time, but it was when the factors worked in tandem that the effects were truly felt. The musical genre was extremely popular throughout the Golden Age of Hollywood, but it is a genre that was born through the development of sound technology and it evolved through the use of Technicolor. Processes such as block booking ensured that it would receive exhibition and the star system created icons, such as Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire, whose appearances in a musical would encourage larger audiences to watch the film. Through an amalgamation of all the different process and technologies that the studios had the means to use, the risk of the studio system being disrupted was minimal throughout the Golden Age of Hollywood. While the Paramount Decree began the end of the studio system, it was not until the rising popularity of television that it became evident that the Hollywood Studio System was done. However, even though the studio system had finished, the major studios were still at the top

of Hollywood and currently many of the major studios still exist in some shape or form, still considered as major studios today. Overall, while the Hollywood Studio System died, bringing an end to the Golden Age of Hollywood, the studios still survive, continuing to produce films to this day.

Word count – 27,558

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