

AS SELECTED BY 1,000 ANIMATION PROFESSIONALS



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Edited by Jerry Beck

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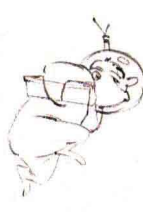
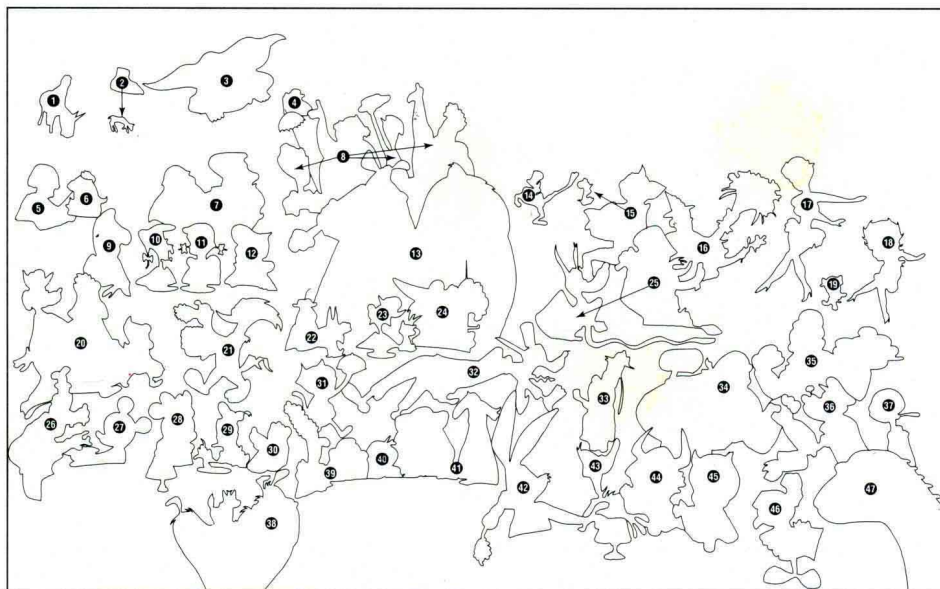
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COVER ARTWORK CHARACTER KEY

- 1 A Unicorn in the Garden
- 2 Bambi Meets Godzilla
- 3 Superman
- 4 The Man Who Planted Trees
- 5 Man (The Tell-Tale Heart)
- 6 Squirrels (Peace on Earth)
- 7 Quasi at the Quackadero
- 8 Dora and The Dover Boys
- 9 Red (Red Hot Riding Hood)
- 10 Red (Little Rural Riding Hood)
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- 12 Red (Little Red Riding Rabbit)
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- 15 Tom and Jerry (The Cat Concerto)
- 16 Koko the Clown and Bimbo (Snow White)
- 17 Red (Red Hot Riding Hood)
- 18 Betty Boop (Minnie the Moocher)
- 19 Pudgy (Betty Boop's dog)
- 20 Red, Grandma and Wolf (Red Hot Riding Hood)
- 21 Woody Woodpecker (The Barber of Seville)
- 22 The Cat Came Back
- 23 Bad Luck Blackie and White Kitty
- 24 Sylvester (The Scarlet Pumpernickel)
- 25 Wolf Cousins (Little Rural Riding Hood)
- 26 Goofy (Clock Cleaners)
- 27 Mickey Mouse (Brave Little Tailor)
- 28 Minnie Mouse (Brave Little Tailor)
- 29 Donald Duck (The Band Concert)
- 30 Pluto
- 31 Felix the Cat (Felix in Hollywood)
- 32 Wolf (Northwest Hounded Police)
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- 45 Porky Pig (Duck Dodgers in the 24 1/2th Century)
- 46 Marvin the Martian (Duck Dodgers in the 24 1/2th Century)
- 47 Gertie the Dinosaur



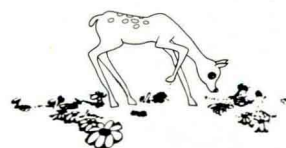
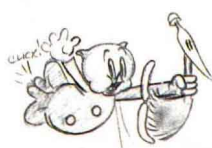
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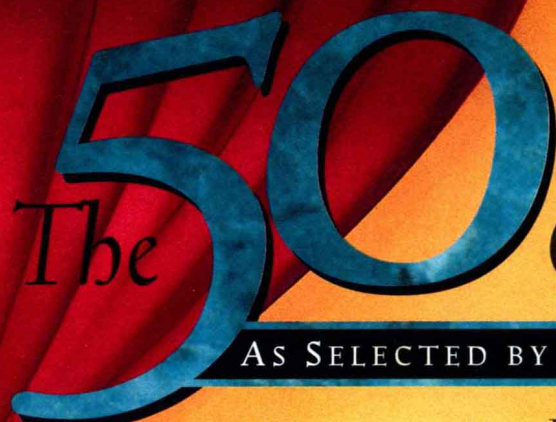
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The 50 Greatest Cartoons

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The 50

AS SELECTED BY

AS SELECTED BY 1,000 ANIMATION PROFESSIONALS

Edited by Jerry Beck



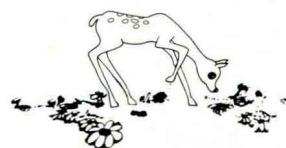
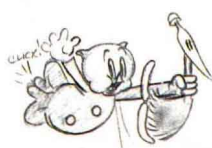
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Editor's Note

This volume is an elaborate program book for the cartoon festival of my dreams. The fifty cartoons showcased here were chosen in a survey of more than one thousand animators, cartoon historians, and animation professionals. Their decisions turned into my pleasure—I got to rescreen all the films to confirm their consensus.

No single person picked these fifty films. All of us, myself included, have many favorites which did not make the final cut. But to my delight, this is an extraordinarily well-rounded collection of classic animation. While it is full of popular Disney, MGM, and Warner Bros. films, it also includes cartoons by Walter Lantz, the Fleischer Studios, UPA, and the National Film Board of Canada, as well as pioneering efforts like *Gertie the Dinosaur* and the work of contemporary artists.

Many of those polled are members of the New York, Hollywood, Portland, and San Francisco chapters of ASIFA (Association Internationale du Film D'Animation—see page 189 for more information), a film society made up of animators, film students, and cartoon buffs. Ballots were also sent to members of the Society for Animation Studies, one hundred animation studios, and film critics at more than one hundred periodicals. All were asked to rank their favorite cartoons from numbers 1–50; any film, foreign or domestic, classic or contemporary, was eligible, so long as it was short (less than thirty minutes) and cel animated (a special exception was made for *Gertie the Dinosaur*, which was animated with paper). The ballot was tallied by weighing each choice with its ranking.

Of the thousands of cartoons produced since 1908, there are probably a few hundred more that could have made the grade; we have listed the runners-up at the end of the list of fifty, but even that does not cover every worthy cartoon.

I think everyone reading this book will find at least one or two absences that they consider inexplicable, and might even wonder why one or two of those present merit inclusion. Many of those polled remarked that they had trouble comparing cartoons of vastly different styles and artistry, qualifying their lists with voluminous notes. Every voter used his or her own criteria, but the decision came down to a simple question: Is this a classic cartoon? The answer for every cartoon included is, of course, yes!

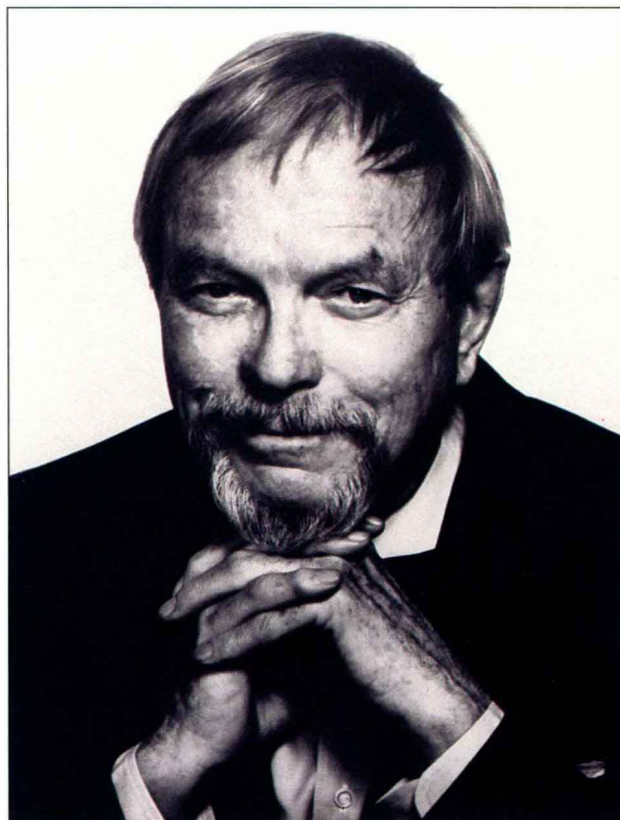
The Fifty Greatest Cartoons celebrates these cartoons with prime examples of original animation art, chosen from the greatest private collections and galleries located all over the world. We've also used frame enlargements from rare 35mm prints, pencil sketches, and seldom-seen advertising material to illustrate selected cartoons. Artist and Fleischer historian Leslie Cabarga provided us with two original paintings (*Snow White* and *Bimbo's Initiation*); animation director Daryll Van Citters helped us illustrate *King-Size Canary*, *Duck*

Amuck, and *The Scarlet Pumpernickel*.

In addition to a concise plot synopsis, full credits, and production information, each cartoon is given a critical appraisal from a distinguished animation pundit. I'd like to especially thank these critics for sharing comments, insights, and wisdom with us. (See page 192 for their credits.)

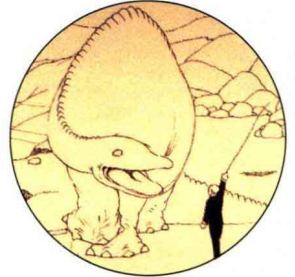
This book is a tribute to fifty very special cartoons. But the only true way to appreciate these films is to see them—at animation festivals, on television (you can catch many of them if you glue yourself to The Cartoon Network, The Disney Channel, and Nickelodeon), or by purchasing videotapes and laser discs. I encourage you to seek out the fifty greatest cartoons and see what all the fuss is about. You'll have a marvellous time doing it. I did!

—Jerry Beck
Hollywood, California
1994

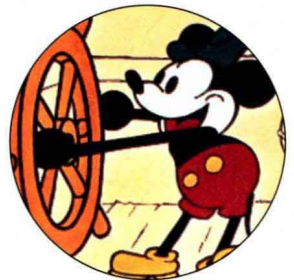


My first impression on reading this list of the fifty greatest cartoons is what a superb gathering it is. I do believe that you could blindly shuffle the entire pack of cartoons several times and put them down in random order and it would in every case—no matter how often the shuffle—represent a great and amazing overview of the eighty-odd years of this wonderful, youthful craft of ours. If you put them down alphabetically, *What's Opera, Doc?* would probably be last and I would still be delighted and honored to be there. A special hosanna to Jerry Beck for providing this star-spangled tribute to animation—a worthy craft indeed.

CHUCK JONES



A Brief History of Animation

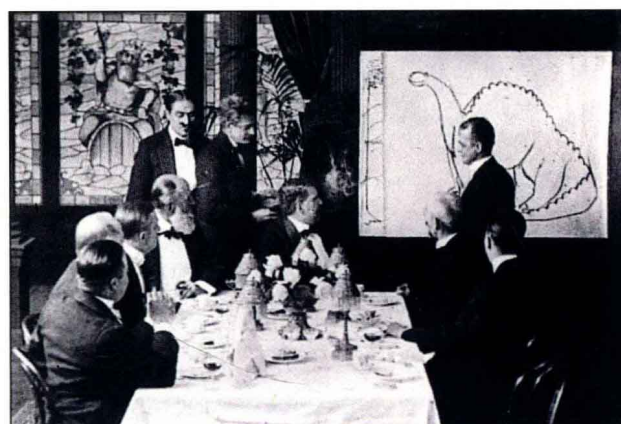
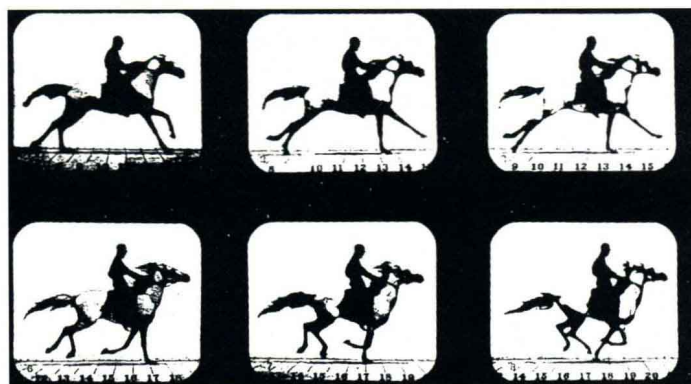


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The history of animation encompasses several stories. Like all histories, it begins with individuals, in this case creative and inventive people whose talent, ingenuity, and vision allowed them to go beyond an art form as they'd found it. Because animation combines artistry and technology, its history also involves the development of techniques and procedures which varied from simple paper cutouts to elaborate computer setups. Many of these innovations were created against the backdrop of the complex studio system of Hollywood; the stories of these studios are another element of animation history, as is the development of unique artistic styles associated with these studios. And finally, the characters created by mere mortals often took on immortal and fantastic lives of their own, and their biographies are another

Below: Muybridge's experiment. Above, right: In a filmed introduction to his vaudeville act, Winsor McCay drew Gertie for a group of friends in a New York restaurant.



integral part of animation history. Throughout this book, you will find these components highlighted in sidebars. In this chapter, we will attempt to unite them in a cohesive chronology.

The earliest attempts at animation can be found in cave drawings of animals drawn with legs in several positions to imitate motion. The effort to analyze motion on film culminated in an experiment by photographer Edward Muybridge. To settle a bet made with Leland Stanford (then governor of California) as to whether all four feet of a racehorse were off the ground at the same time, Muybridge set up twelve cameras with tripwires; as a horse passed each one, a photograph was snapped. By looking at all twelve pictures, Stanford was able to see that at one point none of the horse's hooves were touching the ground. Muybridge found a way to

project these animated images and showed them to Thomas Edison, who was inspired to invent the kinetoscope. By looking through this machine, viewers could see a flickering, minute-long motion picture. The movie industry had been born.

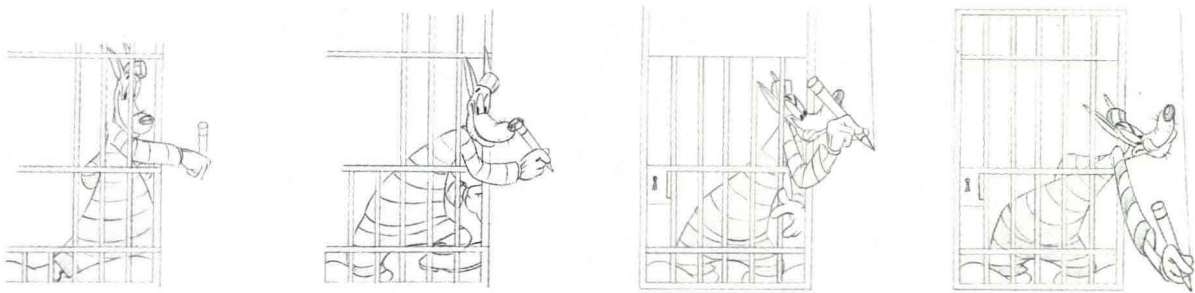
Animated films began as an offshoot of trick photography movies, or "trick films," popular in the early 1900s. In the beginning, just the novelty of an animated drawing was enough to captivate audiences who were getting used to seeing live-action moving pictures. As audiences gained sophistication, cartoon makers kept the public's attention with broader humor, appealing characters, and better drawings. Two early experimenters were J. Stuart Blackton, with his *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* (1906), in which an unseen hand draws words and pictures, and French

HOW A CARTOON IS MADE

Many people are amazed when they learn how much skill, effort, and labor are involved in the making of a cartoon. Thousands of drawings and cels, and dozens of finished background paintings—plus a script, musical score, special effects, and voices—are required for each seven-minute short. Every animation studio followed its own production procedures, but most followed the same general plan.

In most studios, ideas were fleshed out on storyboards, where gags were plotted and refined. Usually, dialogue was recorded before the drawing commenced, so that animators could time their sequences to the words being spoken. Once the story was finalized, the work was divided up; in most cases, several animators worked on every cartoon. For every second of film time, between twelve and twenty-four drawings were created, each only slightly different than the preceding one. The master animators drew the main poses for each character, expertly capturing motion and expression; “in-betweeners” drew the rest. These drawings were then traced onto celluloid by inkers; the back of the cels were painted to exact specifications. For the average short film, about four thousand animation drawings and cels were required.

At the same time, background paintings were prepared by layout and background artists. Cameramen combined the cels and backgrounds, shooting each cel against the proper background in continuity, frame by frame. Musical scores and special effects were then added to the finished film.



Two important stages in the creation of animation: Above: Animation drawings from *Northwest Hounded Police*. Thousands of animation drawings are produced, each slightly advancing the motion. Below: Cel and cel with background from *Duck Dodgers in the 24^{1/2} Century*. Animation drawings were traced onto celluloid; backgrounds were painted separately. Cameramen combined the cels with the proper backgrounds and shot them in sequence.



artist Emil Cohl, who made *Fantasmagorie* (1908), in which stick figures metamorphosize against a black background.

But the creation of animation as an art is often credited to newspaper cartoonist Winsor McCay, who produced more than four thousand meticulously drawn pictures for his first animated cartoon, *Little Nemo* (1911). His second film, *The Story of a Mosquito*, portrays an encounter between a drunken man and a mosquito. In his third cartoon, he made another giant leap forward by imbuing his character, Gertie the Dinosaur, with a personality. The mischievous Gertie eats, breathes, laughs, and

cries—and even today *Gertie the Dinosaur* is considered one of the greatest animated films ever produced (it is number six in this book). As Leonard Maltin wrote in *Of Mice and Magic*, “Winsor McCay breathed life into an inanimate character, and this was his greatest achievement. It did not go unnoticed. Gertie was so successful that it made people forget the animated films that preceded it, even McCay’s. For years, Gertie has been named in film histories as the first animated cartoon. With all its impact, it might as well have been.”

TECHNOLOGY

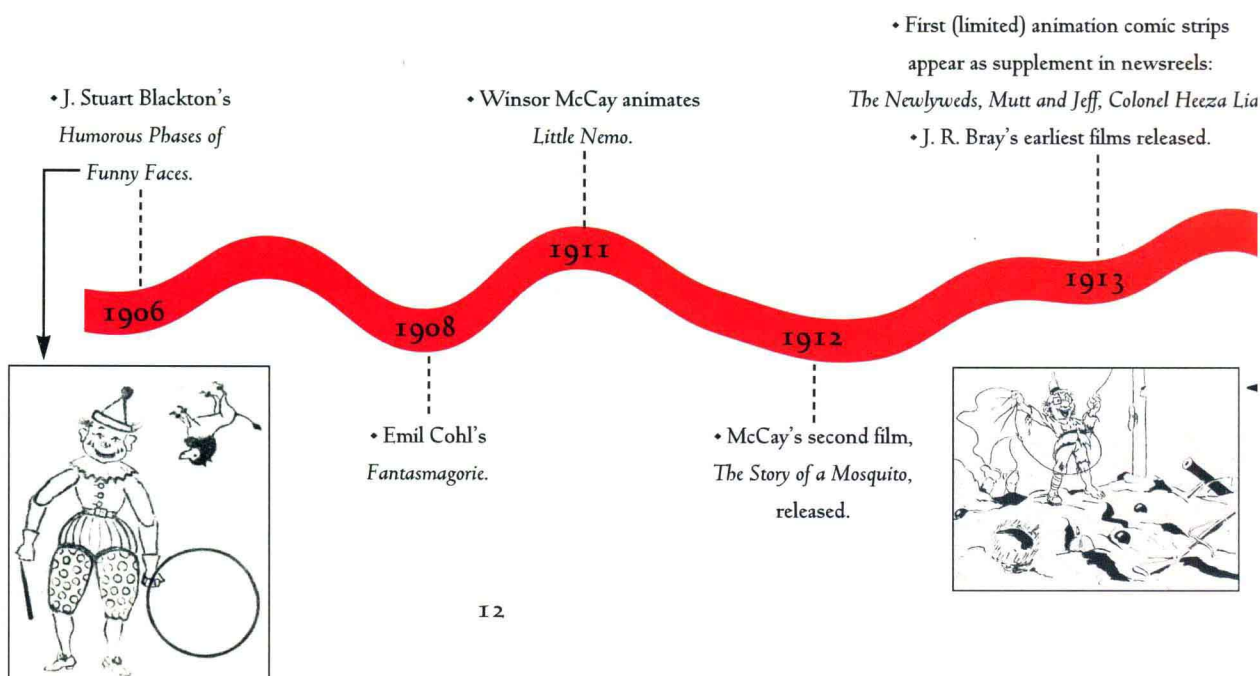
Throughout the years, animators have embraced tech-

nical innovations to make their laborious job easier, the finished films look better, and the images more spectacular. The first major innovation was the use of celluloid overlays. In the earliest animated cartoons, such as those of Winsor McCay, the artist had to draw everything in the picture, over and over on paper, with only slight changes in each drawing to create the illusion of movement. Pioneer cartoonist producer J. R. Bray first patented the use of celluloid sheets in 1914 to paint the static background. The moving characters, still drawn and animated on paper, were shot through the clear portion of the cel overlay. Artist

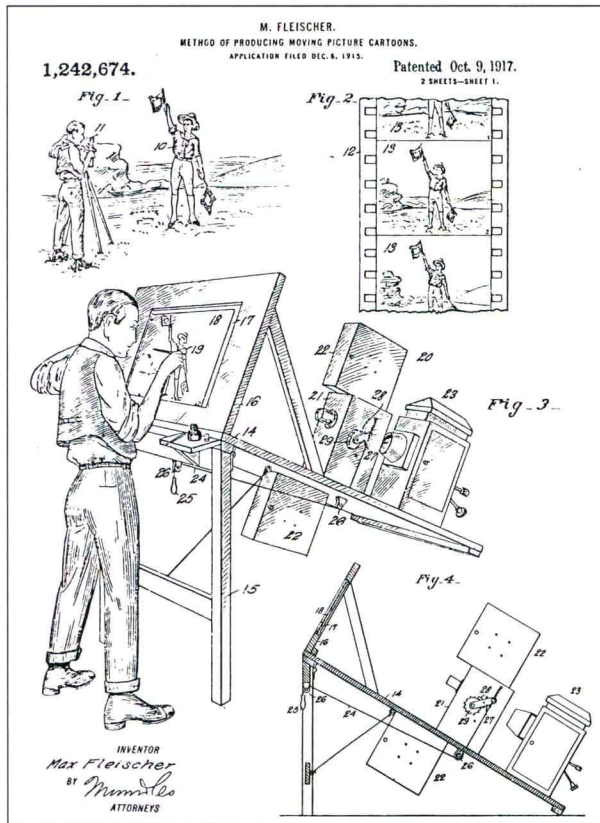
Earl Hurd patented the use of cels later the same year, transferring the animated characters from paper to cels and photographing them over the static background art—the basic method of cel animation still practiced today. The use of cels shortened production schedules and made possible the mass-production of animation.

Max Fleischer invented the rotoscope in 1918 as another method of speeding up cartoon production. This device enables an animator to trace live action photography one frame at a time for animation purposes; actors were filmed simulating the desired action, so that animators could see and capture the movement of actual

The following time line does not purport to be an all-inclusive history of animation. Listed in the time line are notable highlights in chronological order, including important films, famous creators, and technical achievements.



This illustration accompanied Fleischer's patent application for the rotoscope.



bodies. Though not as practical as Max envisioned, the rotoscope has become a valuable tool in the special-effects field and has enhanced many animated features, including *Gulliver's Travels* and *Lord of the Rings*.

Color and sound, 3-D and CinemaScope, all came to animation at the same time that Hollywood adopted these advancements for live-action subjects. Prints still survive of hand-tinted color cartoons made during the silent-film days, including McCay's *Little Nemo*. Max Fleischer experimented with sound cartoons in 1924 with a series of sing-along DeForrest Phonofilms,

but it was Walt Disney who popularized sound cartoons when he introduced Mickey Mouse in *Steamboat Willie* (1928) and put full spectrum 3-strip Technicolor on the map with *Flowers and Trees* (1932).

Bringing visual depth to animation had been an ambition since the 1930s when Ub Iwerks and Walt Disney each developed separate multiplane systems, and Max Fleischer's studio built three-dimensional sets for their cartoons. The early 1950s brought on a 3-D craze in which several studios brought popular characters (including *Bugs Bunny*, *Popeye*, *Woody Woodpecker*,

