

Film Festival Screening Program:
Animated Films – From Cel Animation to Digital

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Introduction

This proposed film festival is devoted to showcasing and exploring the progression animation has made from cel to computer, the various steps to get there, and how animation is used in unlikely areas of filmmaking. Cel animation was the preeminent form of animation for much of the 20th century. In the 80s digital animation began to be used to color film, and by 1995 the first feature-length computer generated film was created with *Toy Story*—which blasted off the studio of Pixar that we all know today. The key difference between Cel animation and Digital is the way in which they are made. Cel animation is drawn by hand onto celluloid sheets, called animation cels, (Adobe, n.d.). Digital animation is made with computers and software, like Adobe. However, there are evolutions in film that show the build-up to computer-generated animation, from the first cel animated film (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*), to the first xerography film (*One Hundred and One Dalmatians*), to special effects (*Jurassic Park*), and finally to computer animation (*Toy Story*).

Proposed Schedule

ILM Section

1. Light & Magic Docuseries (ep. 1-2)
2. The Lost World
3. Light & Magic Docuseries (ep. 3-4)
4. Jurassic Park
5. Light & Magic Docuseries (ep. 5-6)

Animation Section

6. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
7. Song of the South
8. One Hundred and One Dalmatians
9. Toy Story
10. The Pixar Story
11. Wish
12. Dream on Silly Dreamer
13. The Boy and the Heron

Film List

Buck, C., & Veerasunthorn, F. (Directors). (2023, August 8). *Wish* [Film]. Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.

Director(s)

- Chris Buck was born on February 24, 1958 in Wichita, Kansas. He graduated from California Institute for the Arts, and joined the studio as a character animator for well-known films like *The Fox and the Hound* (1981), *The Black Cauldron* (1985), and *The Little Mermaid* (1989). In 1995 he became supervising animator on *Pocahontas*, and had his directorial debut on *Tarzan* (1999). His most well-known and acclaimed film is *Frozen* which he won an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature, and *Frozen II* which is the second-highest grossing animated film of all time (Screendollars, 2023a).
- Fawn Veerasunthorn was born on January 1, 1983, and raised in Chonburi, Thailand. She studied animation at Columbia College of Art & Design in Columbus, Ohio. Veerasunthorn worked as a story artist at Illumination before moving over to Disney to be the lead story artist on *Frozen* (2013). After working on major successes like *Moana* (2016) and *Zootopia* (2016), she was promoted to head of story for *Raya and the Last Dragon* in 2021. *Wish* is Veerasunthorn's co-directorial debut (Screendollars, 2023b).

Synopsis

- In a land where wishes are “protected” by a King, who has the power to make wishes come true, once a year a random person from the Kingdom gets their wish granted. Until one day a young woman named Asha learns the truth, that King Magnifico doesn't randomly grant a wish, but chooses what would do the least amount of change to the society he has created, thus only granting the most inconsequential of dreams. Asha,

desperate to free her community's dreams, makes a wish so strong that a Star falls from the heavens to help her save the wishes. Star, Asha's friends, and her family all make a collective wish that releases the trapped wishes from King Magnifico's grasp. Finally allowing them all to pursue their dreams as they see fit—knowing that not all their desires will come true, but that the power is in their hands.

Foster, H., & Jackson, W. (Directors). (1946, November 12). *Song of the South* [Film]. RKO Radio Pictures.

Director(s)

- Harve Foster was born on November 27, 1907 in Kansas. Not much is written about Harve Foster. What we do know of his life is the films and shows that he left behind. He directed not only the live-action parts of *Song of the South*, but *The Fabulous Joe*, *Rebound*, *The Adventures of Rin Tin Tin*, and *Public Defender* (IMDb, n.d.-a).
- The animation parts of this film were directed by Wilfred Jackson. Jackson was born in Chicago on January 24, 1906, and attended Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. He volunteered at The Walt Disney Studios to wash cels and assist animators, until one day they started to pay him. In 1928, Wilfred – or Jaxon as he was known in the studio – “devised a method of synchronizing animation with music by using a metronome that could then be converted to a music track. The innovation, which was featured in Mickey Mouse's debut film *Steamboat Willie*, revolutionized the entertainment medium,” (D23, n.d.-d). Up to that point studios had been using phonographic discs, but now The Walt

Disney Studios could synchronize sound directly with film. Jaxon quickly became a director due to his innovative spirit (D23, n.d.-d).

Synopsis

- *Song of the South* is a live-action feature film about a young boy, Little Johnny, who is taken to his grandmother's plantation where Uncle Remus tells the little boy stories about Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, and Brer Bear. This film was nominated for Best Scoring of a Musical Picture, and even won an Oscar for Best Song. This was the studio's first plunge into live-action filmmaking, but since Walt Disney was known for animation he wanted to at least have some animation in the film. Thus the moments with Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, and Brer Bear are animated. However, there are also scenes where these animated characters share space in a live-action environment with a live-action cast and vice versa. This is the first feature-length film to combine live-action with animated cartoons. In today's lens the caricature of Uncle Remus and other characters is seen as a racist stereotype. Additionally, it romanticizes the picture of slavery with a kindly master-slave relationship which is a distortion of the cruel and harsh reality. However, the film—if viewed for its time—could be seen as a gesture of goodwill for a time of intense racial relations. Additionally, the actors of the film stand behind it, with Hattie McDaniel saying “If I had for one moment considered any part of the picture degrading or harmful to my people, I would not have appeared therein,” and her co-star James Baskett (who won an honorary Oscar for Best Actor for this film) saying “I believe that certain groups are doing my race more harm in seeking to create dissension than can ever possibly come out of the ‘Song of the South’” (Lattanzio, 2024).

Hand, D. (Director). (1937, December 21). *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* [Film]. RKO Radio Pictures.

Director(s)

- David Hand joined the Disney team in 1930. He was born on January 23, 1900, in Plainfield, New Jersey, and attended the Chicago Art Institute. After school he went to work at the J.R. Bray Studio where he met animator and director Max Fleischer. In 1928, after the production of *Steamboat Willie*, Dave—as he was known by friends—saw the potential of The Walt Disney Studios and decided to apply for a job. It didn't take long for Walt Disney to see Dave's potential, and he promoted him quickly to directing the studio's animated shorts. By 1933, Dave was promoted to Production Supervisor of the Studio, and tasked with supervising director of Disney's first feature—*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (D23, n.d.-b).

Synopsis

- A young princess named Snow White is exiled and hunted by her wicked step-mother who is jealous of the princess' beauty. Snow White finds harbor in a cottage of seven dwarfs who help her triumph over the wicked Queen, though only after young Snow White has succumbed to a poisoned apple left by the conniving Queen. Coming upon the princess' funeral, a prince grants Snow White one parting kiss only to awaken her from the curse of the apple through true love's first kiss.

Hoyt, H. (Director). (1925, February 8). *The Lost World* [Film]. First National Pictures.

Director(s)

- The first person to make a stop-motion animated feature film, Harry O. Hoyt was born on August 6, 1885 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He studied at the University of Minnesota, Columbia and Yale Universities. He began his career in movies by writing, and eventually directing for World Pictures. In April 1923 he moved to Hollywood, and was hired by First National Pictures as an executive reader. By the fall he was directing *The Woman on the Jury*. In 1924 he was tapped to direct *The Lost World*, which became known as an epic and a “super-production” for World Pictures(Spitzzeri, 2022).

Synopsis

- *The Lost World* follows a London professor who has just announced that dinosaurs have survived, and are in fact living within the Amazon jungle. He mounts an expedition to prove his point, and is joined by a group of characters – notably a journalist named Edward Malone and Paula White—a young woman who hopes to find her missing father. They undertake this journey and see dinosaurs and humanoids fighting in the magnificent Amazon setting.

Iwerks, L. (Director). (2007, August 28). *The Pixar Story* [Film]. Buena Vista Pictures Distribution.

Director(s)

- Born in 1970, Leslie Iwerks is the granddaughter of Disney animation legend, Ub Iwerks. She attended the USC School of Cinema-Television. A documentary director and producer, her short film *Recycled Life* was nominated for an Academy Award in 2006.

Her Production company has made numerous narrative films, television shows, and documentaries (IMDb, n.d.-d).

Synopsis

- *The Pixar Story* shows never-before-seen footage from the Pixar library and archival material. It also gives firsthand accounts by animators, studio executives, directors, and more to tell the story of the revolutionary company who changed animation forever. *The Pixar Story* shows how Ed Catmull, John Lasseter, and Steve Jobs took a struggling studio and created a whole new animation industry. Starting with *Toy Story* they introduced CG animation to new audiences and took it to new heights.

Kasdan, L. (2022, July 27). *Light & Magic* (No. 1-6) [Streaming Series]. Disney+.

<https://www.disneyplus.com/series/light-magic/3OtlwhtW6Z7E>

Director(s)

- Born on January 14, 1949 in Miami, Florida, Lawrence Kasdan worked on a variety of films as a director, producer and screenwriter. He is known for directing films such as *Body Heat*, *The Big Chill*, and *Silverado*, as well as writing *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, and *Return of the Jedi*. He makes his return to direct this 6 part docu-series about Industrial Light and Magic, the effects that made *Star Wars* and Lucasfilms so successful (IMDb, n.d.-c).

Synopsis

- *Light and Magic* is a docu-series that follows the history of Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), which is the special effects division of Lucasfilm. It starts with the founding by

George Lucas in 1975 due to the need to create groundbreaking effects for Star Wars. The series features interviews with important people from ILM, like Dennis Muren and even George Lucas himself. It shows the evolution of ILM, and how it's been used on films like *Star Wars*, *E.T.*, *Jurassic Park*, and *Terminator 2*.

Lasseter, J. (Director). (1995, November 19). *Toy Story* [Film]. Buena Vista Pictures Distribution.

Director(s)

- John Lasseter was born in Los Angeles, California on January 12, 1957. He began his career as the second student to ever enroll and be accepted to The Walt Disney Company's new Character Animation Program at the California Institute of the Arts. That first year included classmates like Tim Burton, Brad Bird, and John Musker. He apprenticed at the studio during summer breaks, and worked as a ride operator at Disneyland. Lasseter received a job at Disney's Feature Animation Department after graduating from college, and worked on projects like *The Fox and the Hound* (1981) and *Mickey's Christmas Carol* (1984). He transitioned to working in Lucasfilm's Industrial Light and Magic where he worked on *Young Sherlock Holmes* (1985), and became fascinated with the idea of combining hand-drawn animation with computer-generated animation. When Steve Jobs purchased Lucasfilm's Industrial Light and Magic computer animation division, he renamed it to the well-known Pixar. Pixar and Disney signed a three-picture deal, with the first film of the new studio being the very first all computer-generated feature film (Rotten Tomatoes, n.d.).

Synopsis

- *Toy Story* is a charming story of toys, come to life. The story follows Woody, a cowboy doll, who belongs to a young boy named Andy. However, Andy gets a new doll—an astronaut by the name of Buzz. Not only does Andy start playing with Buzz more frequently, but all the decorations in the room start changing to suit Buzz's aesthetic. The western-themed wallpaper and bedding disappear, replaced by the stars and planets of outer space. Our cowboy doll, Woody, feels threatened as Andy's favorite, and schemes of ways to get rid of Buzz. Eventually Woody and Buzz fall into the clutches of a neighbor boy, Sid Phillips, a kid who likes to amputate his dolls and conduct Frankensteinian experiments upon them. Woody and Buzz must work together to get back to Andy, and save themselves from Sid.

Lund, D. (Director). (2005, January 31). *Dream On Silly Dreamer* [DVD]. WestLund Productions.

Director(s)

- Graduating from Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 1989, Dan Lund moved to California where he got a job as a production assistant at the Walt Disney Company. While there he learned visual effects, and worked on films like *Prince and the Pauper*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and the last hand-drawn animation the Disney studios' has produced—*Home on the Range* (Lund & West, n.d.).

Synopsis

- In 2002, 200 artists were let go from the Walt Disney Studios to be replaced with computers. Dan Lund interviews the newly released animators who had spent their lives devoted to the animation styles that Disney had created. The film is a love letter to the Disney of yesteryears, and the happy place it once was (Lund & West, n.d.).
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Miyazaki, H. (Director). (2023, July 14). *The Boy and the Heron* [Film]. Toho.

Director(s)

- Hayao Miyazaki was born on January 5, 1941 in Tokyo, Japan. He is the most well-known Japanese animator, and perhaps filmmaker, internationally. Miyazaki began his animation career in 1963 working at Toei Douga studio, moving from studio to studio, until he began Studio Ghibli with fellow filmmaker Isao Takahata. Not only does he direct, produce, and animate, but he also writes and draws manga. In 2014 Miyazaki was awarded the Honorary Academy Award, making him the second Japanese filmmaker to receive this honor after Akira Kurosawa in 1990. Miyazaki is well-known for despising computer animation, and uses cel animation on all of his films. He does allow other filmmakers in his studio to experiment with computer animation, but none of the films that this studio has made using this method have been as successful as those that were hand-drawn (IMDb, n.d.-b).

Synopsis

- After his mother dies, a young boy named Mahito struggles to settle in his new town. A talking heron appears to Mahito, and informs him that his mother is still alive. The heron

lures the young boy to enter an abandoned tower in search of her, only to be transported to another world. Mahito must navigate the heron's lies and trickery to come to accept the truth, that death is inevitable but life must persist.

Reitherman, W., Luske, H., & Geronimi, C. (Directors). (1961, January 25). *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* [Film]. Buena Vista Distribution.

Director(s)

- Wolfgang Reitherman was born on June 26, 1909 in Munich, Germany, but was raised in the US since infancy in California. He attended Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, where he met an instructor who taught classes at the Walt Disney Studios. In 1933, Woolie—as he was known by friends—joined the Studio’s animation department. In World War II, Woolie joined the US Army Air Forces, where he became an ace pilot and served in Africa, India, China and the South Pacific, even earning the Distinguished Flying Cross. After the war, he returned to the Studio where he’d go on to direct *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*, as well as *The Sword in the Stone* (1963), *The Jungle Book* (1967), *The Aristocats* (1970), and *Robin Hood* (1973), (D23, n.d.-e).
- One of the main sequence director’s for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Ham Luske was born in Chicago on October 16, 1903, and earned his degree from the University of California at Berkeley. He joined The Walt Disney Studios in 1931, where he “significantly advanced the area of personality animation,” (D23, n.d.-c). He developed an easy-to-follow, step-by-step system for planning a scene that made him a natural teacher of young animators. After World War II he transitioned from animator to director,

co-directing *Pinocchio*, and working as a sequence director on a number of other feature films for the Studio (D23, n.d.-c).

- Clito Enrico Geronimi was born on June 12, 1901 in Chiavenna, Italy. He moved to New York with his family when he was a child, at which point they decided to anglicize his name to be Clyde Henry Geronimi. He went to night school at Cooper Union, and landed his first animation job at William Randolph Hearst's International Film Service producing shorts. Moving through various production studios, it wasn't until 1931 that he landed his job at The Walt Disney Studios. There he worked as sequence director on many of the well-known Disney films, and served as supervising director for the 1959 *Sleeping Beauty* (D23, n.d.-a).

Synopsis

- Our story begins with two dalmatians, Pongo and Perdita, and their owner, Roger and Anita (respectively). Out on a walk with Roger, Pongo spots Perdita from across the grassy knoll. He masterminds a way to get Roger to meet the beautiful Perdita's owner. Roger and Anita, end up tangled in their dog's leashes, meeting and eventually falling in love. After the owners get married, Perdita and Pongo move in together prompting them to have a litter of 15 dalmatian puppies. One day, Anita's old friend Cruella De Vil shows up and offers to buy the puppies from the couple. Roger refuses. The following scenes follow along as Cruella De Vil schemes and plots to get the puppies, all so that she may make a fur coat out of their hide.

Director(s)

- Steven Allan Spielberg is perhaps one of the most well-known and influential directors in Hollywood's history. He was born in 1946 in Cincinnati, Ohio. He briefly attended California State University Long Beach, before dropping out to pursue his entertainment career. His early film *The Sugarland Express* (1974) with Goldie Hawn made him gain notice, but his next film was what made him an "international superstar," (IMDb, n.d.-e): *Jaws* (1975). He had a string of success in the 80s with *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *The Color Purple* (1985), *Back to the Future* (1985), and his feature-length live-action film which featured animated cartoons during the full film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988). It was in 1993 that Spielberg released his next revolutionary film, *Jurassic Park*. The dinosaurs that are featured in *Jurassic Park* were originally meant to be the work of Phil Tippett and his team using only stop motion animation. However, with the advent of computer graphics, Spielberg chose to go in a different, all-new direction. In creating photo-real, CG dinosaurs, CG animator, Steve 'Spaz' Williams and Co-Visual Effects Supervisor, Mark Dippe created something wholly new—computer generated animation with industrial lights & magic (Hannon, 2015).

Synopsis

- John Hammond, a billionaire genius, invites a group of scientists and mathematicians to his private park. Then Alan Grant, Ellie Sattler, and Ian Malcolm arrive they find a theme park full of dinosaurs that have been bioengineered from prehistoric DNA that resided in a mosquito. John Hammond assures them that the park is safe, only for them to bear

witness to the dinosaurs breaking free and hunting down them, as well as Hammond's two grandkids.

Criteria for Film Selection

Selection Criteria

1. On the track from cel to computer animation, each film in this selection must be the first feature-length film that made some kind of advancement in technique or technology for animation.
2. Our final films will be the most recent examples of cel animation and digital animation to show the progression to today's animation.
3. Each film must be a stand-alone or stand-alone adjacent (i.e., the sequel/follow-up films were not part of the original planning of the movies and were released at least 3+ years after the original).
4. For the documentaries & clips it was necessary to find things that explained cel animation, computer animation, and special effects animation. We chose the most reputable based upon critical reviews under each category.

Selection List & Reviews

1. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs: 1st feature-length cel-animated film | [Review](#)
2. Song of the South: 1st feature-length film to feature live-action with cartoons in the same frame | [Review](#)
3. One Hundred and One Dalmatians: 1st feature-length film to use Xerography for the entire film | [Review](#)
4. The Lost World: 1st feature-length film to use stop-motion animation | [Review](#)
5. Jurassic Park: 1st feature-length stand-alone film to utilize Industrial Lights & Magic throughout the whole film | [Review](#)
6. Toy Story: 1st entirely computer-generated feature | [Review](#)

7. Wish: Most recent feature to use computer-generated animation | [Review](#)
8. The Boy and the Heron: Most recent feature to use cel animation | [Review](#)
9. The Pixar Story: Story of Pixar's founding and the rise of computer animation | [Review](#)
10. Dream on Silly Dreamer: Story of the decline of hand-drawn animation, the effects of computer animation, and the loss of an art form | [Review](#)
11. Light & Magic: Story of Industrial Lights & Magic, and the revolution that it facilitated for special effects in live-action films and shows | [Review](#)

Q&A Expert Panel

Guest Panelists

- **Neil Kendrick:** San Diego based artist, filmmaker, writer, photographer, and lecturer at San Diego State University, Neil Kendrick earned his Master's degree in Television, Film and New Media from San Diego State University in 2006 (*Neil Kendrick*, 2024). An experienced panelist (Bard, 2023), Kendrick offers a multi-disciplined knowledge to this festival.
- **Leslie Iwerks:** Born in 1970, Leslie Iwerks is the granddaughter of Disney animation legend, Ub Iwerks. She attended the USC School of Cinema-Television. A documentary director and producer, her short film *Recycled Life* was nominated for an Academy Award in 2006. Her Production company has made numerous narrative films, television shows, and documentaries (IMDb, n.d.-d).
- **Maureen Furniss:** Maureen Furniss is an animation historian, along with a critic professor and founding member of the Society for Animation Studies. She has written many books on animation history, even founding the Animation Journal. Furniss earned her doctorate in Critical Studies from USC School of Cinema-Television (Amazon, 2025).
- **Jerry Beck:** Former Nickelodeon and Disney studio executive, Jerry Beck is a writer, producer, and college professor. He has written for The Hollywood Reporter and Variety, and authored over 15 books. He teaches at CalArts, UCLA, and Woodbury University on animation history (Cartoon Research, n.d.).
- **Ed Ovale:** Archives Manager at the Walt Disney Archives, Ed Ovale is an experienced panelist speaking at D23's Expo in California. He joined the Walt Disney Archives in

2006, and has assisted with various exhibits, preservation and research efforts, screening, and events for the company. He served as the Lead Archivist on the renovation of the 3H Animation wing at The Walt Disney Studios, recreating Walt's office suite to its original location and original glory (Ovalle, n.d.).

Questions for Panelists (Prepared)

1. What was xerography, and how did it help to advance cel animation to digital animation?
2. Due to *Song of the South's* controversial nature, is it still worth viewing and remembering today? Should it have been included in this festival?
3. What was the film that made you fall in love with animation, and why?
4. The films shown were all focused on the first of its kind. What would you say is the pinnacle of cel animation, ILM, stop-motion and digital animation?
5. In *Dream on Silly Dreamer*, we saw Disney let go of many of its old school animators. How has this changed the culture of Disney? And should they consider making hand-drawn animation again? Why or Why not?

Distribution & Acquisition Information

Dream On Silly Dreamer

- Streaming ([Dream On Silly Dreamer Website](#))
- DVD ([Amazon](#))

Jurassic Park

- Streaming ([Swank](#))([Amazon Prime](#))
- DVD ([Amazon](#))

Light & Magic

- Streaming ([Disney+](#))

One Hundred and One Dalmatians

- Streaming ([Swank](#))([Disney+](#))
- DVD ([Amazon](#))

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

- Streaming ([Swank](#))([Disney+](#))
- DVD ([Amazon](#))

Song of the South

- Streaming ([Internet Archive](#))
- DVD ([Poshmark](#))([Classic Movie Locator](#))

The Boy and the Heron

- Streaming ([Max](#))
- DVD ([Amazon](#))

The Lost World

- Streaming ([Kanopy](#))([Amazon Prime](#))

- DVD ([Amazon](#))

The Pixar Story

- Streaming ([Swank](#))([Disney+](#))
- DVD ([Amazon](#))

Toy Story

- Streaming ([Swank](#))([Disney+](#))
- DVD ([Amazon](#))

Wish

- Streaming ([Swank](#))([Wish](#))
- DVD ([Amazon](#))

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