

Movies and the Impact of Images

◎ Chapter 7



Technology at the Movies

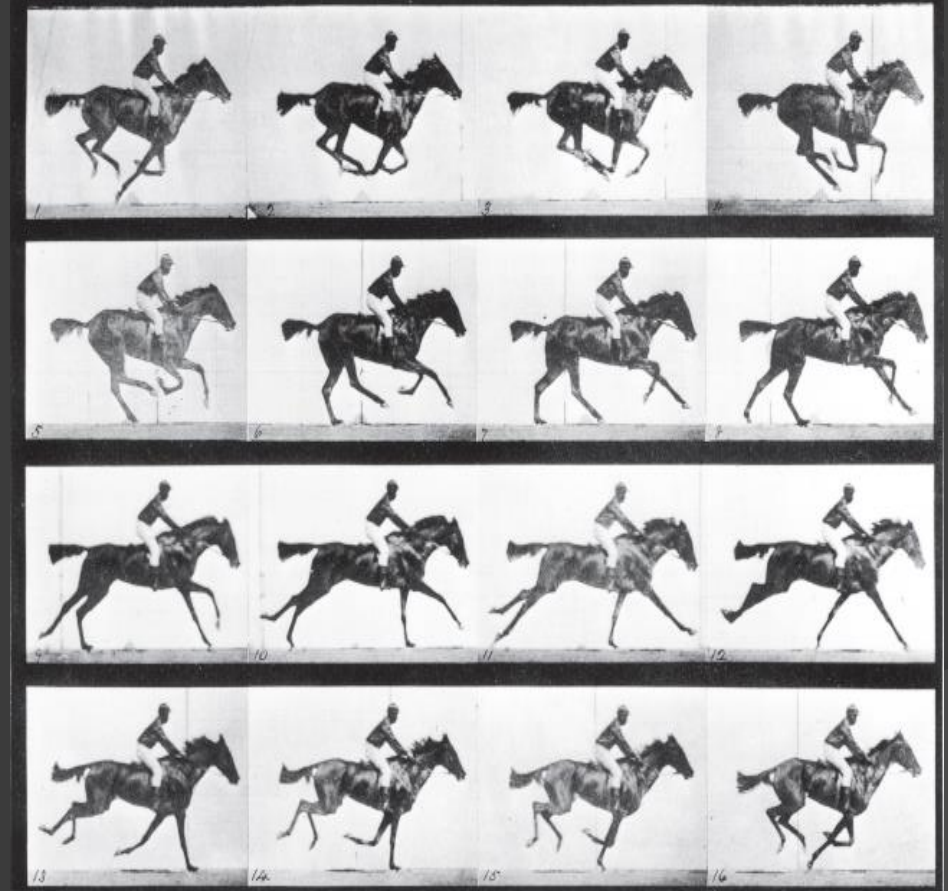
“Watching *Avatar*, I felt sort of the same as when I saw *Star Wars* in 1977. That was another movie I walked into with uncertain expectations.... *Avatar* is not simply a sensational entertainment, although it is that. It’s a technical breakthrough.”

—Roger Ebert

The Development of Film

⦿ Milestones

- Muybridge was the first to project moving pictures.
- Eastman developed the first roll film, which was improved by Goodwin, who used celluloid.
- Kinetograph, kinetoscope, and vitascope developed under Edison.
- Lumière brothers invented the cinematograph.



The Introduction of Narrative

- ◉ Narrative films tell stories.
- ◉ Early narrative filmmakers
 - Georges Méliès
 - *The Vanishing Lady*
 - *Cinderella*
 - *A Trip to the Moon*
 - Edwin S. Porter
 - *The Life of an American Fireman*
 - *The Great Train Robbery*



The Arrival of Nickelodeons

- ◎ Nickelodeons
 - Form of movie theater
 - Name combines the admission price with the Greek word for “theater.”
 - Often converted storefronts
 - Piano players added live music.
 - Transcended language barriers
 - Peaked by 1910



The Rise of the Hollywood Studio System

- ⦿ Edison's Trust: Cartel of major U.S. and French producers
 - Exclusive deal with Eastman
- ⦿ Independent productions moved to Hollywood to escape the Trust.
- ⦿ Zukor's early companies figured out ways to bypass the Trust.
- ⦿ Suit by Fox led to the breakup of the Trust.

The Rise of the Hollywood Studio System (cont.)

- ◎ Entrepreneurs like Zukor developed other tactics for controlling the industry.
 - Vertical integration of all three levels of the movie business
 - Production
 - Distribution
 - Exhibition
 - Turned the film industry into an oligopoly.

Production

- ◎ Actors
 - Originally anonymous
 - Industry eventually understood the value of creating stars such as Mary Pickford.
 - Pickford helped elevate the financial status of actors.
 - Left Zukor to form United Artists
- ◎ Studio system controlled creative talent in the industry.



Distribution

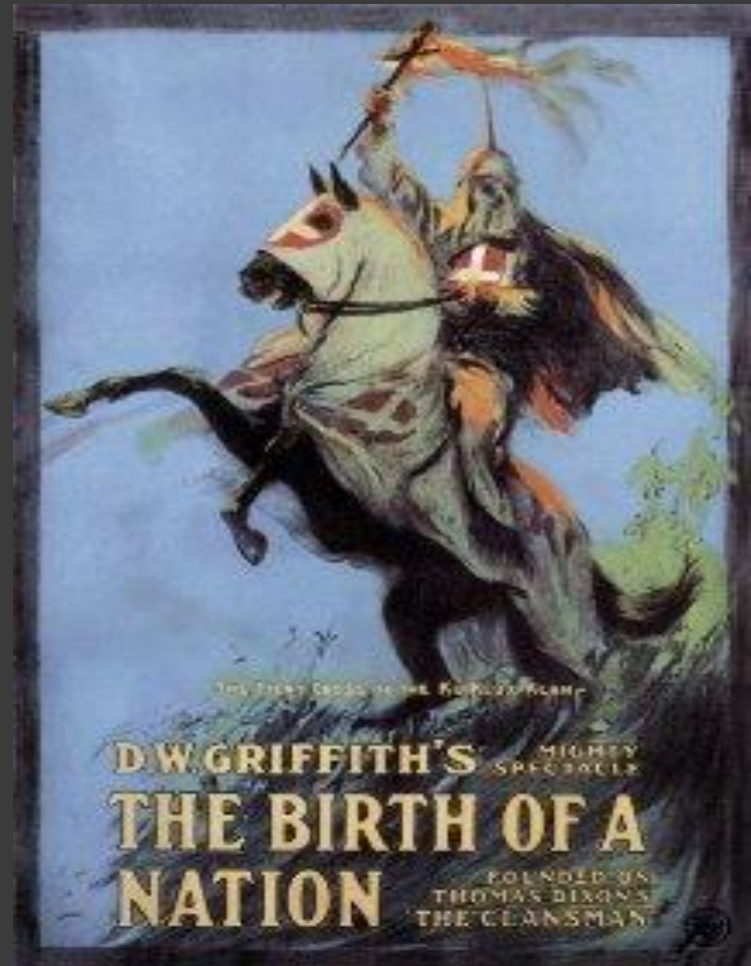
- ◎ Film exchange system
 - In exchange for providing short films, movie companies received a percentage of ticket-gate receipts.
- ◎ Block booking distribution
 - Exhibitors had to rent marginal films in order to get films with big stars.
- ◎ Marketing of American films in Europe

Exhibition

- ◎ Controlling exhibition
 - Edison's Trust
 - Required theaters to purchase licenses or be locked out
 - Zukor bought up theaters and later built movie palaces.
 - Mid-city movie theaters
- ◎ The Big Five and the Little Three formed a powerful oligopoly.

Hollywood Narrative and the Silent Era

- ◎ D.W. Griffith
 - Single most important director in Hollywood's early days
 - *The Birth of a Nation*
 - First feature-length film
 - First blockbuster
- ◎ Popular silent era films
 - *Napoleon*, *Ben-Hur*, and *The Ten Commandments*



The Introduction of Sound

- ◉ Early attempts at talkies failed.
- ◉ *The Jazz Singer* (1927) and *The Singing Fool* (1928) were the first successful talkies.
- ◉ Movietone newsreels
 - Premiered sound film five months before *The Jazz Singer*
 - First film footage with sound
 - Lindbergh's takeoff and return



The Development of Hollywood Style

- ◎ Hollywood narratives
 - Two basic components
 - Story
 - Discourse
- ◎ Hollywood genres
 - Grouping by genre achieves two goals
 - Product standardization
 - Product differentiation



The Development of Hollywood Style

- Three ingredients give Hollywood movies their distinctive flavor: narrative, genre, and author (or director).
- 1. Hollywood Narratives. The two basic components of the narrative are the story (what happens to whom) and the discourse (how the story is told).
- 2. Hollywood Genres. By making films that fall into popular genres, the movie industry provides familiar models that can be imitated. Two related economic goals are product standardization and product differentiation.
- 3. Hollywood “Authors.” Although hundreds of people contribute to a film’s production, the director serves as the main “author.”

The Development of Hollywood Style (cont.)

⦿ Popular genres

- Action/adventure
- Mystery/suspense
- Fantasy/science fiction
- Musical
- Western
- Comedy
- Drama
- Romance
- Horror
- Gangster
- Film noir

The Development of Hollywood Style (cont.)

- ◎ Hollywood “authors”
 - Particular cinematic style or topic
 - Stemmed from Dennis Hopper’s *Easy Rider* and George Lucas’s *American Graffiti*
 - New Wave of directors
 - Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, and Brian De Palma
 - Recognition rare for women and minorities



Outside the Hollywood System

- Global cinema
 - Other countries have a rich history of producing successful films.
 - Losing ground as they compete with independent American films



Outside the Hollywood System

- ◎ The documentary tradition
 - Early forms of documentary
 - Interest films, newsreels, travelogues



Outside the Hollywood System

- ◉ Cinema verité
- ◉ (French: “truth cinema”)
- ◉ French film movement of the 1960s that showed people in everyday situations with authentic dialogue and naturalness ..



Outside the Hollywood System (cont.)

- The rise of independent films
 - Known as indies
 - Made on a shoestring budget and shown in small venues and film festivals
 - Independent film festivals important for discovering new talent
 - Indies as a feeder system for major studios has declined
 - New distribution routes for indies



The Hollywood Ten

- ◎ Hollywood Ten hearings
 - HUAC investigations of alleged subversive and communist ties
 - The Hollywood Ten were nine screenwriters and one producer.
 - Refused to identify communist sympathizers and were charged with contempt and imprisoned
 - Blacklisted by major studios upon their release

The Paramount Decision

⦿ Paramount decision

- Supreme Court forced the studios to gradually divest themselves of their theaters.
- Meant to increase competition, but never really changed the oligopoly structure of the Hollywood film industry
- Created opportunities for exhibition
 - Art houses and drive-in theaters

Moving to the Suburbs

- ◎ Transformation from a wartime economy and a surge in consumer production had a significant impact on moviegoing.
 - Money spent on consumer products instead of movie tickets
 - People married younger, so fewer couples were dating.
 - Television explosion in the late 50s

Television Changes Hollywood

- ◎ TV became the primary family entertainment by the mid-1950s.
- ◎ Movie industry's response
 - More serious subject matter that explored larger social problems
 - New technologies
 - Cinerama, CinemaScope, VistaVision
 - 3-D
 - Panavision

Hollywood Adapts to Home Entertainment

- ⦿ Introduction of cable and videocassettes in 1970s changed movie exhibition.
 - Video market was a financial bonanza for movie industry.
- ⦿ Traditional video rental market is declining.
- ⦿ Future of video rental is in Internet distribution.

Production, Distribution, and Exhibition Today

- ◎ Movie studios have six major sources of income.
 - Box-office receipts
 - DVD sales, rentals, and downloads
 - Pay-per-view, premium cable, etc.
 - Foreign markets
 - Distributing indie films
 - Licensing and product placement

Table 7.1: Top 10 All-Time Box Office Champions

Rank	Title/Date	Domestic Gross** (\$ millions)
1	<i>Avatar</i> (2009)	\$760.5
2	<i>Titanic</i> (1997, 2012 3-D)	658.6
3	<i>The Avengers</i> (2012)	623.4
4	<i>The Dark Knight</i> (2008)	533
5	<i>Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace</i> (1999, 2012 3-D)	474.5
6	<i>Star Wars</i> (1977, 1997)	461
7	<i>The Dark Knight Rises</i> (2012)	447.8
8	<i>Shrek 2</i> (2004)	437.7
9	<i>E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial</i> (1982, 2002)	435
10	<i>Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest</i> (2006)	423.3

Production, Distribution, and Exhibition Today (cont.)

- Seven companies operate more than 50 percent of U.S. screens.
- Development of megaplexes in the 1990s
 - Addition of IMAX screens and digital projectors in the 2000s
 - Also screen nonmovie events
 - Live sporting events, concerts, and classic TV show marathons

The Major Studio Players

◎ Big Six

- Warner Brothers, Paramount, Twentieth Century Fox, Universal, Columbia Pictures, and Disney
- Account for more than 90 percent of commercial film revenues

◎ Began diversifying in the 1980s

- Heavy promotion and synergy
- Flood of corporate mergers

Big Six Studios

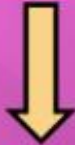
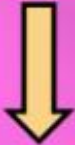
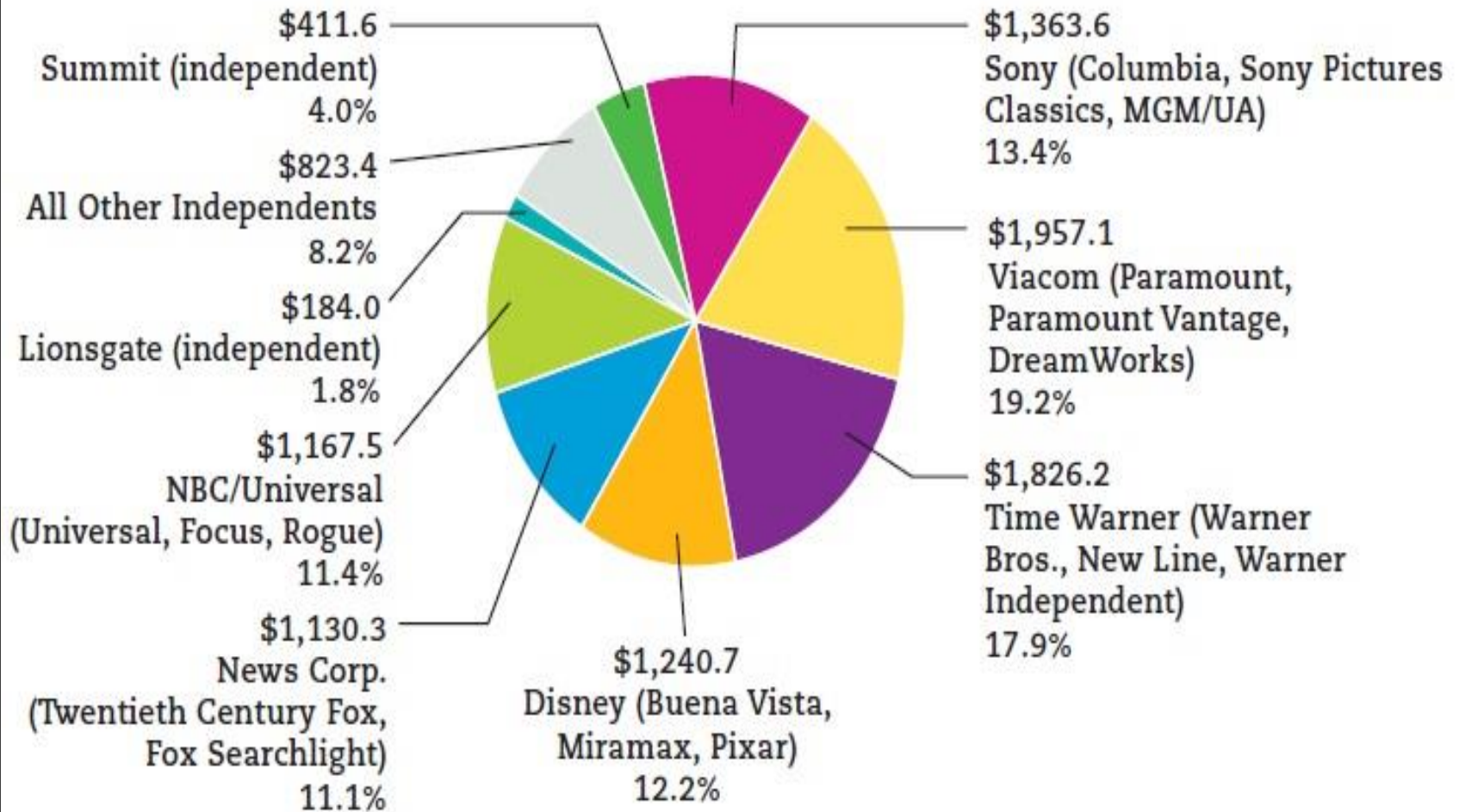


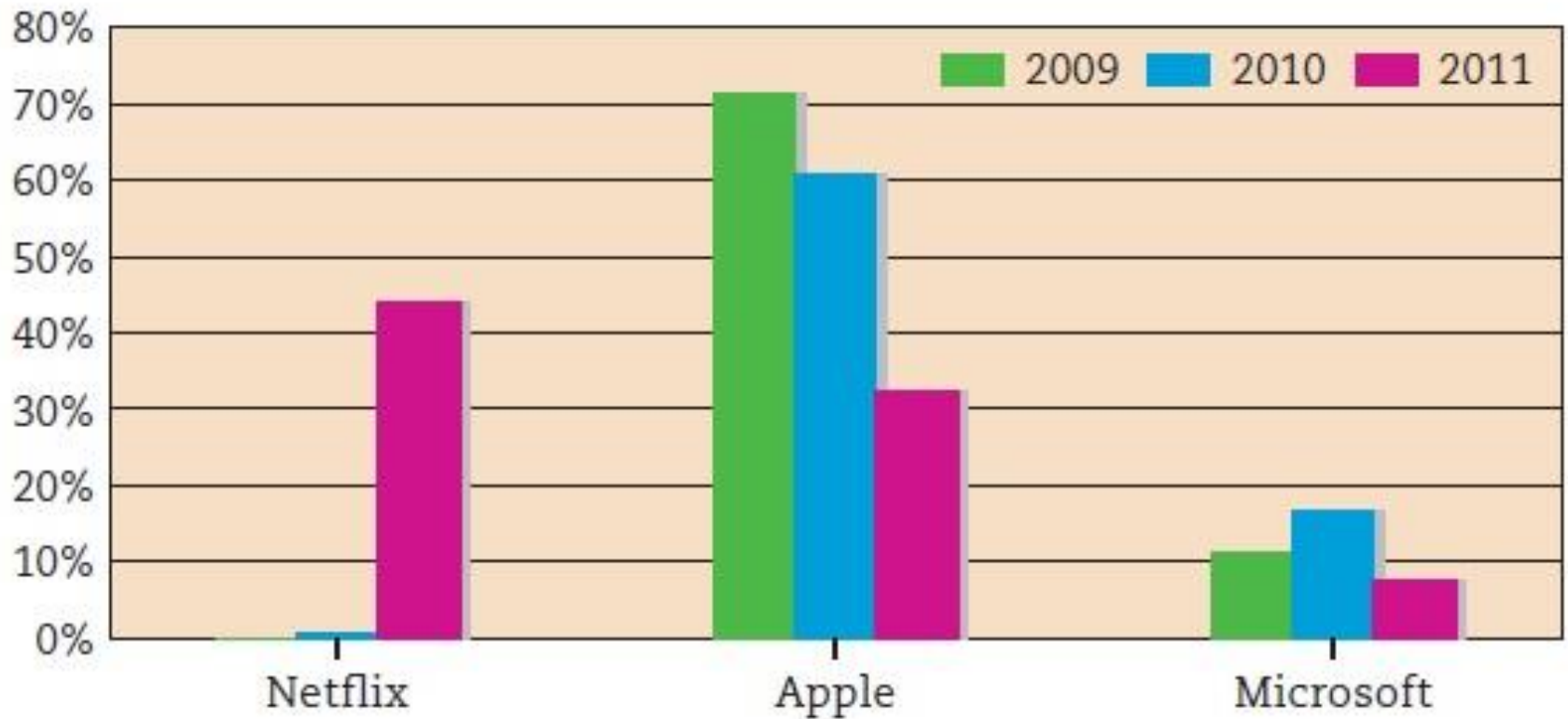
Figure 7.2: Market Share of U.S. Film Studios and Distributors, 2011



Convergence: Movies Adjust to the Digital Turn

- ◎ Movie industry has quickly embraced Internet distribution.
 - Services include Hulu, Netflix, Xfinity, YouTube, and CinemaNow.
 - Increasingly available on smartphones and tablets
 - 2012: first year digital outpaced physical DVDs
- ◎ Internet essential for marketing

Figure 7.3: Online Movie Market Share Ranking in 2011



Alternative Voices

◎ Digital video

- Cheaper and more accessible than standard film equipment
- Camera work can be seen instantly without film processing.
- Adopted by major directors
- Same format as DVDs and Internet video, so films can be distributed online easily

Popular Movies and Democracy

- ⦿ Movies function as consensus narratives that operate across different times and cultures.
- ⦿ Do U.S. films contribute to a global village in which people share a universal culture?
- ⦿ Or do U.S. films stifle local culture and diversity?