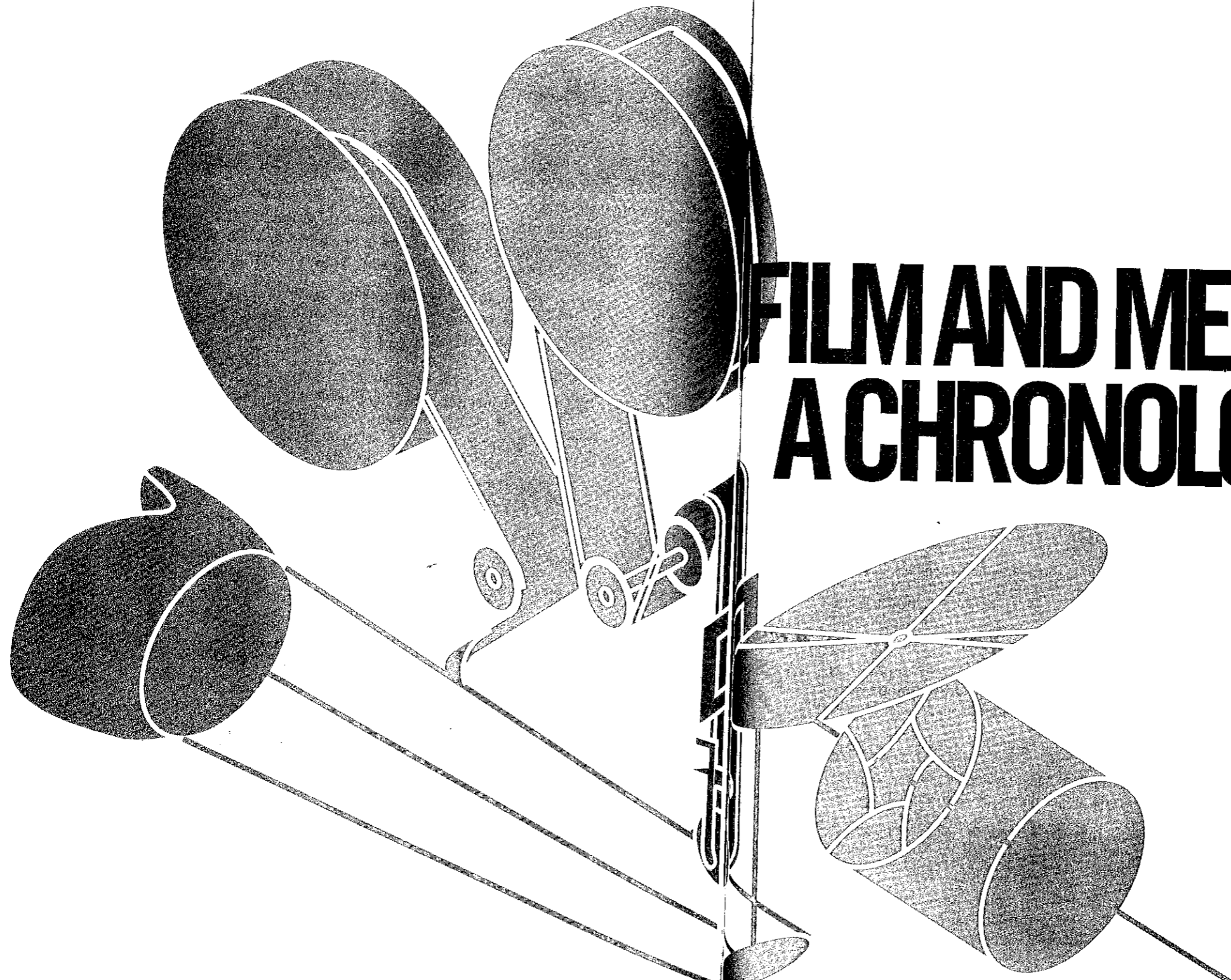


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FILM AND MEDIA: A CHRONOLOGY



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To 1895: Prehistory

- 130
Ptolemy of Alexandria discovers the phenomenon of persistence of vision.
- 1250
Leon Battista Alberti invents forerunner of camera obscura.
- 1456
August 24. Heinrich Cremer finishes binding the first Gutenberg bibles, first books to be printed with movable type.
- 1700s
Rise of newspapers and journals.
- 1800s
Development of widespread literacy in England and elsewhere in Europe, and development as a consequence of mass media culture of books, magazines, and newspapers.
- 1810
König's steam-powered printing press.
- 1827
March 16. The first African-American newspaper, *Freeman's Journal*, appears.
- 1834
Zoetrope, based on an ancient invention, patented.
- 1839
Daguerreotype and Talbotype announced.

To 1895: Prehistory 571

- 1844
Morse's telegraph.
- 1846
Hoe's rotary press.
- 1850
Photographic magic lantern slides come into use.
- 1867
Sholes invents typewriter, to be exploited by Remington.
- 1873
Muybridge's experiments begin in photography of motion. He is successful in 1877.
- 1874
Émile Baudot, French engineer, receives a patent for his 5-unit telegraph code—a great improvement over Morse code, and a foundation for the digital world of a hundred years later.
- 1876
Bell's telephone.
- 1877
Edison's phonograph.
Reynaud's Praxinoscope.
- 1880
New York Graphic prints the first halftone photographs.
- 1884
Eastman's roll paper photographic medium.
Mergenthaler's Linotype.
The Nipkow disc introduces the concept of scanning.
- 1886
Henry James hires Scotsman Alexander Pollock Watt to manage his affairs. "He takes 10% of what he gets for me," writes James, "but I am advised that his favorable action...more than makes up for this." Watt thus becomes the first literary agent.
- 1889
Development of Eastman's flexible roll film medium for photography.
Dickson demonstrates Kinetophone to Edison.
- 1891
Development of the Kinetoscope private viewer.
- 1895
December 28. Lumières' first public showing of Cinématographe films at Grand Café, Boulevard des Capucines, Paris.
Max Skladanowsky completes Bioskop projector.

American Mutoscope and Biograph Company founded; originally known as the K.M.C.D. Syndicate (after its founders, E. B. Koopman, Henry N. Marvin, Herman Casler, and W. K. L. Dickson).

1896–1915: The Birth of Film

1896

April 23. Edison's first show at Koster and Bial's Music Hall, New York.
September 2. Marconi demonstrates wireless telegraphy in England.

1897

Edison begins patent infringement suits.
May. Fire at film showing at Bazar de la Charité takes 140 lives.
Edwin Porter joins Edison's company.

1899

James Stuart Blackton founds Vitagraph Company.

1900

At the International Exposition in Paris, prototypical color and sound film systems are demonstrated.
Danish telephone engineer Valdemar Poulsen patents "telegraphone," a wire recording system.

1901

First transatlantic wireless transmission, by Marconi from England to Newfoundland.
Queen Victoria's funeral reported via film.
Fessenden begins experiments in voice transmission.

1902

Méliès's *Voyage to the Moon*.
T. L. Tally's Electric Theatre opens in Los Angeles.
The first Ealing studio is built in the western suburbs of London by Will Barber.
Pathé opens studio at Vincennes.

1903

Porter's *The Life of an American Fireman* and *The Great Train Robbery*.
Biograph moves to an indoor studio on New York's East 14th Street.

1905

Hepworth's *Rescued by Rover*.

1906

DeForest invents Audion vacuum tube.

1907

Griffith begins work in film as an actor.

1908

Émile Cohl (in France) and Winsor McKay (in the U.S.) begin work in animation.
Pathé leads industry in abandoning outright sales of film in favor of rentals.
Film d'art movement begins in France.
June. American Biograph hires D. W. Griffith.

1909

The Motion Picture Patents Company is founded, soon followed by the General Film Company (distributors). Patent wars begin.

1910

Griffith and his company begin wintering in Los Angeles. The locus of major film activity shifts from New York to Los Angeles within the next few years.

1911

Mack Sennett's first Keystone comedy produced.

1912

Armstrong's regenerative circuit developed.
Warner brothers begin producing films; Fox company and Universal formed.
British Board of Film Censors formed.
First fan magazines appear.

1913

Italian epics *Quo Vadis?* and *Cabiria* suggest value of feature-length films.

1915

Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* signals beginning of new period in film history.
Vachel Lindsay's *The Art of the Moving Picture* published.

1916–1930: Silent Film, the Births of Radio and Sound Film

1916

Griffith's *Intolerance*.
Münsterberg's *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* published.

1917

UFA formed in Germany.
Kuleshov's workshop begins in Soviet Union.

1918

Armstrong's Superheterodyne circuit makes radio a commercial possibility.

1919

United Artists formed. Star system dominant in film industry.
General Electric creates Radio Corporation of America to take over monopoly of American Marconi Company.
Soviet film industry nationalized.

Tri-Ergon sound-on-film system patented in Germany.

Wiene's *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. German Expressionist movement begins.

1920

Thanks in part to World War I, America dominates world film industry.

Immigration of filmmakers to Hollywood starts.

KDKA begins broadcasting in Pittsburgh.

1922

August 28. 5:15 pm. The first radio commercial: Mr. Blackwell, for the Queensboro Corp. on AT&T's WEAJ in New York.

Lang's *Dr. Mabuse*.

Vertov's *Kino-Pravda*.

Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*.

BBC begins informally in Britain.

1923

Stiller's *Saga of Gösta Berling*, starring Greta Garbo.

Stroheim's *Greed*, forerunner of contemporary realism.

Time—first "newsmagazine"—begins publication.

1924

Columbia Pictures founded, MGM consolidated.

Léger's *Ballet Mécanique*.

1925

London Film Society founded; film study develops in France.

Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*.

1926

August 6. Vitaphone (sound-on-record) premiere: *Don Juan*.

November 15. 8 pm to 12:25 am NBC begins network broadcasting with a program from the roof of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York featuring the New York Symphony, the New York Oratorio Society, Will Rogers, Weber & Fields, and Vincent Lopez. Twenty-five stations in 21 cities broadcast the program.

Pudovkin's *Film Technique* published.

Rudolph Valentino dies.

1927

British Cinematograph Act provides for a quota system.

BBC chartered.

U.S. Radio Act creates Federal Radio Commission (later FCC).

Roxy Theatre opens in New York.

April. Fox Movietone News begins, using sound-on-film system.

October 6. Warner Brothers' *The Jazz Singer*, with music and several talking sequences, first popular sound success.

CBS formed.

January 1. NBC's Blue network begins broadcasting.

German inventor Pflüger devises magnetic tape system.

1928

RKO Radio Pictures Corporation formed by G.E./Westinghouse/R.C.A. to exploit R.C.A.'s sound patents in film.

Television demonstrated by John Logie Baird in London.

Massive transition to sound leads to increased influence of banking interests in film production.

Crossley Radio Survey ratings begin. First published 1930.

First "all-talking" picture: *Lights of N.Y.*

Dreyer's *Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*.

Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*.

Dali and Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou*.

1929

Hitchcock's *Blackmail*, first British dialogue film.

Mamoulian's *Applause*, one of the first successful musicals.

Marx Brothers' first film, *The Cocoanuts*, presages massive exodus of Broadway talent to Hollywood.

Amos 'n' Andy becomes first popular NBC network series.

Conversion to sound has resulted in nearly twofold increase in box-office admission in two years (1927: 60 million admissions; 1929: 110 million).

Electrical transcription introduced to radio.

1930

Production Code instituted, but laxly enforced.

Necessity of foreign-language versions for export results in second wave of influx of European talent to Hollywood.

Clair's *Sous les toits de Paris*, first French sound film.

Von Sternberg's *Blue Angel*, with Marlene Dietrich.

Disney's first *Silly Symphony*.

U.S. brings antitrust suit against RCA and its patent allies.

Grierson, Rotha, Wright, and Jennings involved in British documentary movement.

1931–1945: The Great Age of Hollywood and Radio

1931

Hecht and MacArthur's play *The Front Page* is filmed by Lewis Milestone. It marks the continued growth in importance of newspapers as a cultural medium.

Wellman's *Public Enemy* marks rise of Gangster genre.

Chaplin's *City Lights* filmed with music-only soundtrack.

Dracula and *Frankenstein*, emblems of the Horror genre.

Murnau and Flaherty collaborate on semidocumentary *Tabu*.

1932

Hawks, Hughes, and Hecht collaborate on *Scarface*, major Gangster film.

Postdubbing techniques put into practice, greatly facilitating the shooting of sound films.

Radio City Music Hall, the ultimate movie palace, opens in the Radio City complex, home of RCA, in Rockefeller Center.

Venice Film Festival—first of its kind—begins.

Lubitsch's *Trouble in Paradise* confirms the Paramount style of sophisticated comedy for the decade.

1933

Astaire and Rogers in *Flying Down to Rio* establish a style of urbane sophistication that marks much entertainment of the 1930s.

Cooper and Schoedsack's *King Kong* evokes racial fears to establish a popular myth.

Busby Berkeley's choreography for *42nd Street* establishes a style for the Musical of the 1930s.

Arnheim's *Film as Art* published.

German film industry under Nazi control.

British Film Institute founded.

Armstrong develops FM radio.

First "Fireside Chats" by President Roosevelt utilize radio medium.

1934

Breen strengthens censorship under Production Code.

Capra's *It Happened One Night*, major early Screwball Comedy, along with Hawks's *Twentieth Century*.

Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* celebrates Nazi mystique.

British government involved in financing documentaries.

Flaherty completes *Man of Aran*.

The Communications Act of 1934 recognizes the interdependency of telephone, telegraph, and radio (and television) broadcasting but treats the older media differently from the new radio industry. Telephone and telegraph are seen as natural monopolies and designated as "common carriers" that must furnish service as requested at rates governed by an organization to be called the Federal Communications Commission. Broadcasting, however, is considered a competitive activity. The principle of public ownership of the airwaves is recognized: the FCC will issue limited licenses to broadcasters and govern the nature of their activities.

1935

Technicolor three-strip process comes into use.

De Rochemont's March of Time series of documentaries begins.

"Audimeter"—device for radio broadcast ratings—invented.

1936

BBC begins television service (to be interrupted by the war).

Cinémathèque Française founded by Henri Langlois, Georges Franju, and Jean Mitry.

Chaplin's *Modern Times*.

Capra's *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* marks cycle of American populist films.

Renoir's *Le Crime de M. Lange*.

Life magazine debuts.

1937

Renoir's *Grand Illusion*.

Arriflex lightweight 35 mm camera—the first with reflex shutter—introduced.

1938

Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky*.

Michael Balcon takes over production at Ealing Studios.

October 31. Welles's *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast.

1939

National Film Board of Canada founded.

Hollywood's greatest year: Selznick's *Gone With the Wind* and MGM's *The Wizard of Oz* (both directed by Victor Fleming) become classics of entertainment fantasy.

John Ford's *Stagecoach*, classic Western.

Renoir's *The Rules of the Game*.

April 30. President Roosevelt appears in a telecast at the World's Fair in New York marking the inauguration of regular television service in the U.S.

June 19. Pocket Books, a new company partly owned by Simon & Schuster, puts ten pocket-size paper-covered books priced at 25 cents each on sale at Macy's and a few Manhattan newsstands. The paperback revolution begins.

August 26. First major-league baseball telecast: a doubleheader between the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Cincinnati Reds.

1940

January 12. First American television network broadcast on WNBT-TV, New York, and WRGB-TV, Schenectady.

August. CBS demonstrates their color television system, developed by Peter Goldmark.

Hitchcock moves to Hollywood.

Murrow's broadcasts from London during the Blitz dramatize news value of radio.

1941

Renoir moves to Hollywood.

Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath*, from Steinbeck novel.

Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* establishes his reputation, Bogart's, and the Detective genre.

Welles's *Citizen Kane*, "the great American movie."

1942

Noël Coward's *In Which We Serve* marks paradoxical revitalization of British film during the war.

Capra's *Why We Fight* series of effective documentary propaganda.

1943

Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* marks renewed development of the American avant garde.

First wire sound recorders in use in the military.

Due to antitrust suit, ABC created out of NBC's second network.

Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques founded by Marcel L'Herbier.

1944

Technicolor Monopack system first used for features.

1945

Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* and De Sica's *Shoeshine* mark Neorealism.

De Rochemont applies semidocumentary style to fiction in *The House on 92nd Street*.

Murrow reports from Buchenwald.

German tape recorders captured.

The ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator Analyzor and Computer) is completed in November at the University of Pennsylvania.

1946–1960: The Growth of Television

1946

February 14. The War Department announces the development of ENIAC. For the first time, electronic speed is applied to numerical tasks. The device covers 15,000 square feet of the basement of the Moore School of Electronic Engineering at the University of Pennsylvania.

American film industry's best year at the box office: \$1.7 billion in receipts.

Cannes Film Festival founded.

Sony Corporation founded by Akio Morita.

Paramount antitrust suit begins.

American television networks begin broadcasting; BBC resumes.

Hawks's *The Big Sleep* presages Film Noir genre.

Wyler's *The Best Years of Our Lives*, popular study of the effects of war.

Hitchcock's *Notorious*.

June 8. Milton Berle's first television show. He will become known as "Mr. Television."

June 19. First television network sponsor: Gillette, for the Joe Louis vs. Billy Conn boxing match.

1947

October 1. The *Philco Radio Hour* with Bing Crosby is the first taped, delayed radio broadcast.

October 20. House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) begins hearings on "Communist influence in Hollywood"; nineteen Hollywood personalities are subpoenaed by HUAC to testify about their knowledge of or possible involvement in Communist Party activities.

November 24. At notorious meeting at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Eastern bankers inform studio executives that investment funds will be curtailed if the studios do not cooperate with HUAC. The studios quickly capitulate, informing employees that a refusal to cooperate means that they will have their employment terminated.

Actor's Studio founded by Robert Lewis, Cheryl Crawford, and Elia Kazan and run by Lee Strasberg from 1948. The studio was home of the "method," an acting technique based on the concepts of Constantin Stanislavski.

La Revue du Cinéma founded by critic and theorist André Bazin, along with Jacques Doniol-Valcroze. Four years later it is renamed *Cahiers du Cinéma*.

Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, last in populist tradition.

The transistor is invented at Bell Labs.

1948

Astruc's essay on "Caméra-Stylo" published.

Howard Hughes buys RKO.

Black radio stations begin broadcasting.

Milton Berle's *Texaco Star Theatre* begins television comedy format.

Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town* begins television variety format.

June 21. Goldmark's LP record unveiled.

1949

Donen and Kelly's *On the Town*: new-style Musical.

Stop the Music, first TV quiz show, debuts.

For the first time, more paperback books are sold than hardcovers.

1950

Blacklist in radio and television in full swing.

Eastmancolor stock introduced.

Cocteau's *Orpheus*.

Ophüls's *La Ronde*.

Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*.

Sid Caesar, Imogene Coca begin *Your Show of Shows*.

1951

Murrow and Friendly begin *See It Now* series.

Paramount signs consent decree on antitrust suit.

Lucille Ball's *I Love Lucy* sets the model for television situation comedy; its success indicates film can work in television.

Jack Webb's *Dragnet* premieres, setting the model for television cop shows.

NBC's *Today* program begins, mixing news and features.

Nyby's *The Thing* among first paranoid Science-Fiction films of the decade.

Kurosawa's *Rashomon* successful at Venice Film Festival.

Cahiers du Cinéma begins.

First coast-to-coast television broadcast via AT&T's coaxial cable.

1952

Community Antenna television, precursor of cable, begins.

Kelly and Donen's *Singin' in the Rain*.

Zinnemann's *High Noon*, "adult" Western.

Decca purchases Universal.

Sony develops stereo broadcasting in Japan.

Cinerama debuts.

1953

January 19. Desi Arnaz Jr is born the same day that the episode of *I Love Lucy* in which his fictional alter ego is born is telecast.
 RKO liquidated by owner, General Tire Corp.
 CinemaScope and 3-D introduced.
 Hitchcock's *Rear Window*.
 Chayefsky's *Marty* on *Goodyear Television Playhouse* signals the heyday of live television drama.

1954

January 1. NBC broadcasts Festival of Roses parade in color: first network color-cast.
 January 1. NTSC standard color broadcasting begins in the U.S.
 January. Truffaut's essay "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français" published in *Cahiers du Cinéma*.
 Fellini's *La Strada*, international success.
 Kazan's *On the Waterfront* reinforces Marlon Brando's position as the emblematic star of the 1950s.
 Murrow's *See It Now* broadcast about Senator McCarthy has significant political effect.
 Televised Army-McCarthy hearings result in McCarthy's disgrace and beginning of the end for the blacklist.
 Disney and Warner Bros. contract to produce for ABC.

1955

Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* introduces Indian film to West.
 Commercial (ITV) channel begins broadcasting in U.K.
 Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause* sets the tone for the late fifties.
 James Dean dies.
The Village Voice founded. It will be a major force in the counterculture through the 1960s.
 U.S. Census Bureau reports that 67 percent of all U.S. homes have television. TV revenue surpasses radio revenue by the end of the year.

1956

Release of hundreds of pre-1948 feature films to television signals the new relationship between film and broadcasting industries.
 Ford's *The Searchers*, his most complex Western.
 Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, internationally successful.
 IBM introduces the magnetic disk as a storage medium for computer data.
 IBM enters into a consent decree with the Justice Department forcing the dominant computer company to segregate its computer services business from its other operations.
 November 30. First use of videotape in television: the West Coast feed of *Douglas Edwards with the News*, CBS.

1957

RKO studios sold to Desilu for television production.
 Pocket transistor radios introduced.

1958

Stereophonic records and phonographs first marketed.
 Hitchcock's *Vertigo*.

1959

Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*.
 Birth of the New Wave: Truffaut's *The 400 Blows*, Resnais's *Hiroshima, mon amour*.
 Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, together with other films released this year, marks a turning point in world cinema.
 Cassavetes's *Shadows* suggests the possibility of a more personal American cinema.
 Decca/Universal merges with MCA talent agency.
 First regular series color broadcasts: *Bonanza*, NBC.
 The Integrated Circuit is introduced by Texas Instruments and Fairchild Semiconductor. It will soon empower the "transistor sisters" of the decade.

1960

Godard debuts with *Breathless*.
 Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, first major British working-class film.
 Hitchcock's *Psycho*.
 Videotape now in general use in broadcasting.
 First demonstration of laser device, by Hughes Aircraft Co.
 March 1. Haloid Corporation ships the first Xerox photocopier.
 Leacock-Pennebaker's *Primary* first major Direct Cinema production, indicates new directions for documentary.
 Kracauer's *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* published.
 Antonioni's *L'Avventura*.
 Rouch's *Chronique d'un été*, first film of cinéma vérité.
 In-flight movies introduced on airlines.
 Screen Actors Guild strikes Hollywood to gain share of residual rights for films sold to television.

1961-1980: The Media World

1961

Buñuel's *Viridiana* marks his return to Europe.
 Bergman begins his trilogy with *Through a Glass Darkly*.
 Directors trained in television move into film.
 September. NBC introduces theatrical movies into prime-time scheduling with *How To Marry a Millionaire*, on *Saturday Night at the Movies*.

1962

Truffaut's *Jules and Jim*.
 Dr. No (Terrence Young) begins James Bond series.
 Subscription television experiments begin in California.
 Johnny Carson takes over NBC's late night talkshow; this type of programming

Ernie Kovacs, inventive television comedian, dies at age 42.
Telstar 1 launched.

Fellini's *8 1/2*.

All-Channel rule of the FCC goes into effect, requiring all television sets sold in the U.S. to be equipped to receive UHF.

Young German filmmakers issue "Autorenkino" manifesto at the Oberhausen Short Film Festival.

1963

Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*.

Swedish Film Institute founded.

Holography demonstrated, developed by Ein Leith and Juris Upatnieks, based on work by Dennis Gabor in 1947.

American Airlines' SABRE is the first computerized reservation system, and the model for future online systems.

Cleopatra is a notorious financial disaster.

Philips introduces the audiocassette format.

1964

Godard's *A Married Woman* develops cinema as essay.

McLuhan's *Understanding Media* published.

Antonioni's *Red Desert*.

Lester's *A Hard Day's Night* with The Beatles helps establish the new rock music.

April. IBM introduces the 360, founding a new generation of mainframe computers.

1965

Super-8 mm film format introduced for amateur market.

April 6. "Early Bird" satellite, Intelsat I, is launched. It is the first commercial communications satellite and also the first geosynchronous communications satellite.

CBS joins NBC as an all-color network. ABC follows a few months later marking completion of conversion from black and white.

Lockheed's Dialog opens for business, first online database.

Digital Equipment Corporation's PDP-8 is regarded as the first minicomputer.

1966

Godard's *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her*.

Rossellini continues work in television with *The Rise to Power of Louis XIV*.

Bergman's *Persona* and Antonioni's *Blow-Up* draw new intellectual interest to film.

Loach's television film *Cathy Come Home* results in changes in British housing laws.

Gulf + Western buys Paramount.

FCC ruling requires separate programming on FM stations. FM develops rapidly in the next few years, drawing on the new rock music.

1967

The *World-Journal-Tribune*, a New York newspaper that was the result of a merger of no less than seven papers, dies after little more than year.

Seven Arts buys Warner Bros

New Line Cinema founded in Greenwich Village by Robert Shaye.

Multitrack recording techniques are perfected.

Frederick Wiseman begins his career as documentarist for National Educational Television.

Public Broadcasting Laboratory develops magazine/essay format.

Smothers Brothers introduce a new sophistication and relevance to U.S. television comedy.

BBC's *The Forsyte Saga* becomes a worldwide success over the next few years and establishes the televised novel as a powerful new form.

Flashing techniques are introduced that significantly expand latitude of filmstock. Penn's *Bonnie & Clyde* sets a pattern of antiheroes that continues through the seventies.

Lester's *Petulia* investigates the newly developing consciousness of the sixties.

Sjöman's *I Am Curious—Yellow* breaks new ground in the depiction of sexual activities and excites censorship furor.

American Film Institute founded.

Nam June Paik exhibits video works at the Howard Wise Gallery, New York.

1968

Film an important arena for discussion during the political events of May and June in France.

Television coverage of "police riots" at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August equally influential. "The whole world is watching," the demonstrators chant.

Czech film renaissance cut short by Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Laugh-In experiments with new form of television comedy.

Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* pioneers many new special effects techniques, including front projection.

Kodak introduces 5254 color stock.

Fellini produces *A Director's Notebook* for television.

Rohmer reaches international audiences with intellectual *My Night at Maud's*.

Christian Metz's *Essais sur la signification au cinéma* published.

FCC's "Carterfone" decision allows telephone customers to hook up own equipment to Bell lines.

1969

Growth of photocopying and offset as "instant" printing systems available to individuals and small groups continues.

Development of phototypesetting accelerates.

General-interest magazines continue to decline as special-interest magazines experience rapid growth.

Sesame Street premieres, utilizing TV commercial techniques to teach basic skills.

Warner Brothers—Seven Arts purchased by Kinney National Services, Inc.

Kirk Kerkorian purchases MGM for the first time.

Swiss film experiences a renaissance beginning with the production of Tanner's *La Salamandre*.

Peter Wollen's *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* published.

Ango in Paris is considered a mature treatment of sex, a landmark
er attitudes.

finish Dziga-Vertov experiments with *Tout va bien*. Godard turns

8-bit microprocessor.

launched, first domestic communications satellite.

mon carrier satellite services.

father becomes the most profitable film of all time, to date.

es the Alto graphical user interface.

Pong arcade game is a success and Magnavox's Odyssey video-

nvades the home.

s Band (CB) radio greatly accelerated by first oil crisis.

icist marks renewed interest in shock effect of film.

's *Westworld* utilizes computer-generated graphics and presages

virtual reality twenty years hence.

y online, opens for business.

film business for the first time, sells studio, sets, and costumes.

a pay-television channel, is marketed through cable systems.

ws that, for the first time, television is the prime source of news

, having surpassed newspapers.

gs televised.

ces 5247 color stock.

oving into film and video en masse.

ry chips now hold 4 kilobits.

six-part *Scenes from a Marriage* for television.

J.S. domestic communications satellite, is launched.

air 8800 is the first personal computer offered for sale to public.

system introduced.

... of which accept advertis-

1976

Bergman leaves Sweden.

South Africa is the last nation of any size to begin television service.

By end of 1976, U.S. networks sell all prime advertising time for 1977.

ABC places first in ratings for first time.

Home videotape Betamax cassette system marketed by Sony.

October. British Prestel videotext system begins operations.

Bertolucci's *1900*.

More audiocassettes are sold this year than 8-track cartridges.

During the past eighteen months RCA and AT&T have launched their Satcom and Comstar satellites, respectively, marking the maturity of satellite communications systems.

1977

January 23–30. Alex Haley's *Roots* is broadcast on ABC, setting ratings records. Six of the eight episodes will rank among the top ten television shows of all time.

April 27. Edwin Land of Polaroid Corp. demonstrates Polavision, instant movie system, for immediate sale. It is not successful in the marketplace.

For the first time, NBC News uses more tape than film.

Computer memory chips now hold 16 kilobits of information: 16 times more powerful than five years previously.

Autumn. The David Begelman affair focuses public attention on shady Hollywood business practices.

Critical and commercial success of Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* marks slight shift of film industry away from Hollywood, toward New York.

George Lucas's *Star Wars* is released, quickly becomes highest grossing film of all time.

ABC displaces CBS as leading American network in terms of ratings and advertising revenues. CBS had held the number one position almost without exception since the early fifties. A significant number of NBC and CBS affiliates defect to ABC.

Rise of disco music culminates in popularity of the film *Saturday Night Fever*.

Warner-AMEX's QUBE, the first interactive cable television system, is introduced in Columbus, Ohio. It doesn't last; the technology is not yet powerful enough.

The Apple II microcomputer is offered for sale.

1978

Saturday Night Fever, while highly successful in theaters, nevertheless earns more from soundtrack album sales than from the box office.

January. Orion Pictures Corporation Studio is formed by five former top executives of United Artists. By in effect renting Warners' distribution system, Orion avoids start-up costs of more than \$250 million.

April. *Variety* publishes its first "Vidcassette" review, of *Lectric Lady Disco*, which claims to be the first show produced specifically for the home videotape market.

Fred Silverman, formerly head of programming at both CBS and ABC when those networks ranked first in the ratings game, moves to NBC as president.

Releases of *Grease* and *Superman* reinforce blockbuster success.

October 5. In an episode of *Taxi* the word "bastard" is used.

The Times of London is struck. (The paper will not appear again until a year later.)

December. Philips–MCA begin test-marketing their videodisc player in Atlanta and Seattle.

The Aspen Project, under the supervision of Nicholas Negroponte, experiments with random access computer control of recorded images and sounds, and hence establishes the basis for multimedia. A prototype for the Department of Defense, this set of videodiscs allows the user to tour Aspen, CO, virtually driving down every street, choosing which way to turn at every corner.

Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert, popular newspaper film critics in Chicago, appear on first PBS film review show, establishing the critical trend for the eighties.

Congress at Brighton, England, of the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film (FIAF) establishes the Brighton Project, beginning the trend to a new historicism in film studies.

1979

Canada and Australia emerge as film powers.

February 17. On *Saturday Night Live* (NBC) Gilda Radner performs a parody of singer Patti Smith. The song she sings is dedicated to Mick Jagger and includes the refrain: "Are you woman, are you man/I'm your biggest fucked-up fan." The lyrics are garbled but the refrain is clear. According to *The New York Times* two days later, NBC received 160 calls during and right after the show. "75 found Miss Radner's language 'disgusting;' but 85, the network said, thought she was 'a fabulous and very talented lady.'"

The China Syndrome foreshadows events at Three Mile Island several weeks before they actually occur.

Success of "small" films like *Meatballs*, *Starting Over*, *Breaking Away*, and *Kramer vs Kramer* marks shift away from blockbusters, despite *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, reputed to have cost \$40 million, and *Apocalypse Now*, \$30 million.

Miramax Films, independent distributor, founded by Harvey and Bob Weinstein. John Sayles's *The Return of the Secaucus Seven* ignites a resurgence of the American independent cinema.

A Melbourne, Australia, television station offers the first 3-D service.

For the first time in more than twenty years, revenues in the recording industry are down. Several conglomerates move to sell their record companies.

August 15. Francis Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* is finally released, accompanied by an elaborate publicity campaign.

October. The Ladd Company is formed by former top executives of Twentieth Century Fox, continuing the decentralization of Hollywood executive power that began eighteen months earlier with the formation of Orion Pictures Corp. The Intel Corporation introduces a magnetic bubble memory chip capable of storing 1 million bits of information. Price: approximately \$2,000. This technology does not succeed.

C-SPAN and ESPN cable networks founded.

Visicalc, the first spreadsheet program, gives businesspeople a good reason to buy the Apple II microcomputer.

Large home dish antennas to receive satellite signals are offered to the public at reasonable cost.
 Screen Actors Guild strikes Hollywood film and television studios to gain share of future tape, disc, satellite, and other ancillary rights.
 Godard returns to feature films with *Sauve qui peut la vie*.
 Michael Cimino's *Heaven's Gate* is the biggest financial disaster since *Cleopatra* and marks the beginning of the end for United Artists.
 June. CNN cable service launched, challenging networks on their own turf: news.
 American Film Marketing Association is founded as independent distributors join the establishment.
 Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull* released in black-and-white, later voted the best film of the 1980s by American critics.
 November. Ronald Reagan is first movie actor elected President of the United States.

1981–Present: The Digital World

1981

Microsoft wins the contract to provide operating system software for IBM's personal computer. This gift from IBM will make founders Bill Gates and Paul Allen multibillionaires before the age of thirty.
 Xerox introduces the first commercially available microcomputer with a graphical user interface, the Star, but at a price of \$16,000 it is not-a success.
 Computer RAM chips now hold 64 kilobits.
 May. Kirk Kerkorian acquires United Artists from Transamerica.
 Oilman Marvin Davis purchases Twentieth Century Fox.
 August. IBM PC establishes the standard for microcomputers, using Microsoft's DOS operating system, a derivative of CP/M.
 FCC approves AM stereo system for U.S.
 Paramount's syndicated *Entertainment Tonight* becomes first national entertainment news show.
 Grant Tinker becomes head of NBC, to lead company to ratings primacy in the decade.
 Lucas's and Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* revives the serial style of the 1940s as it establishes a new adventure genre.
 August 1. MTV launched, establishing new model for television use. It will become one of the dominant cultural forces of the decade.
 Walter Cronkite, last of the authoritative newsmen from the early days of broadcasting, retires.
 Steven Bochco's *Hill Street Blues* debuts, refreshing the form of the hour drama and marking the beginning of NBC's rise to the top of the ratings heap.
 Francis Coppola sponsors restoration of Abel Gance's *Napoléon*, setting off a minor wave of interest in film preservation.
The Gods Must Be Crazy, a small South African film, garners considerable international attention.

December. Trials of French Minitel system take place in the town of Vélizy.
 Cable penetration in the U.S. is less than 30 percent; VCR penetration approaches 8 percent.

1982

Spielberg's *E.T.* sets box-office records. The featuring of "Reese's Pieces" signals the beginning of the product placement business.
 Coca-Cola buys Columbia Pictures in a contradiction of the old rule of exhibition that the profit is really at the concessions counter.
 TriStar studio established as a joint venture of Columbia, CBS, and HBO, in an attempt to provide an alternative channel of distribution.
 The success of *Gandhi* marks the arrival on the scene of Goldcrest Films.
 R. W. Fassbinder dies at 37, marking the end of Das Neue Kino.
 Sales of audiocassettes exceed sales of records for the first time.
 The audio CD format is introduced in Japan.
 Disney's *Tron* makes extensive use of computer-generated graphics.
 FCC establishes requirements for low-power television (LPTV).
Blade Runner becomes a cult favorite and a model for the Film-Noir Science-Fiction films of the future.
 Graduating class of the Beijing Film Institute coalesces into the so-called Fifth Generation of Chinese filmmakers. They had entered in 1978, when nationwide college entrance exams had been reinstated after the Cultural Revolution.
 November. Channel 4 opens in the U.K. with mandate to serve minorities.

1983

Lawrence Kasdan's *The Big Chill* adds a Motown soundtrack to the themes of *The Return of the Secaucus Seven*, marks the cinematic coming of age of the baby boom generation, and serves as the emblematic American film of the decade.
 By combining characters with historical footage, Woody Allen's *Zelig* suggests the technical possibilities that lie ten years ahead.
Koyanisqaatsi, no dialogue or narration, score by Philip Glass.
Dragon's Lair is the first arcade video game to use laserdisc technology to provide more realism. Revenue from arcade games now exceeds theatrical film rentals as the locus of power in the American entertainment industry begins to shift from Hollywood to Silicon Valley.
 ABC broadcasts *The Day After* in the middle of the 1980s revival of the antinuclear movement, drawing huge ratings and sparking controversy with its graphic depiction of the aftermath of a nuclear war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Reminiscent of films like *Fail-Safe* and *Dr. Strangelove* twenty years earlier, *The Day After* serves as an eerie reinforcement of the remake philosophy that characterizes the 1980s.
 The Radio Shack 100 introduced, first popular "notebook" computer, especially favored by journalists.

1984

January 24. Apple Computer Inc.'s landmark 1984 commercial is shown during the Super Bowl, introducing the Macintosh.
 Computer RAM chips now hold 256 kilobits.

U.S. cable television industry deregulated.

Michael Jackson's *Thriller* (directed by John Landis) is the first music video to list filmmakers' credits.

Criterion's release of *Citizen Kane* and *King Kong* on Laserdisc mark the possibilities of this new medium for cinephiles.

Bill Cosby's *The Cosby Show* debuts.

Canal Plus founded, first French pay-television service.

François Truffaut dies of a brain tumor at the American Hospital in Neuilly.

Michael Eisner and Jeffrey Katzenberg take over at Disney, found Touchstone Pictures, as Disney makes bid to join mainstream distributors.

Ghostbusters establishes a new relation between the movies and popular culture as its iconography becomes part of our colloquial expression.

Garrett Brown's Skycam technology is used for the first time at the Los Angeles Olympics.

William Gibson's *Neuromancer* memorializes this Orwellian year with its dark vision of the social "cyberspace" that awaits us ten years hence.

The release of *Yellow Earth* begins a new wave of Chinese-language films.

The Terminator begins the rise to prominence of Arnold Schwarzenegger as the world's leading movie star that culminates with *Terminator 2* seven years later.

The year turns out to be nothing like Orwell's novel (or the film of it). Indeed, just around the corner, "perestroika" and "glasnost" will mark the beginning of the end of the totalitarian wave Orwell feared.

1985

Sony and Philips introduce the CD-ROM format for data storage.

March. ABC network sold to Capital Cities Broadcasting for \$3.5 billion. NBC and CBS change hands shortly after.

May. Fox acquires Metromedia broadcast group.

Rupert Murdoch acquires Twentieth Century Fox from Marvin Davis and installs Barry Diller as head.

French Minitel system commercially introduced.

The colorization technique is introduced by Color System Technologies.

November. Lawrence Tisch owns 24.9 percent of CBS.

December. GE announces it will buy RCA and its NBC subsidiary. (The deal is completed in 1986.)

1986

Changes in the tax code eliminating shelters affect independent filmmakers.

Television sets equipped with stereophonic audio and remote controls are now common.

Nintendo dominates the home video game market, which has largely superseded the arcade game business.

Fox's *A Current Affair* launched, establishing model for tabloid television.

March. Ted Turner buys MGM/UA from Kirk Kerkorian, sells the lot to Lorimar Telepictures and other assets back to Kirk Kerkorian, keeps the film library, and renames it Turner Entertainment Company.

March 1. The Grateful Dead conference is founded on the Well, a pioneering online community.

Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* is a success at the Cannes Film Festival, marking a

My Beautiful Laundrette, *A Room with a View*, and *Mona Lisa* mark the beginning of a British mini-new wave, while British producer David Puttnam's storied tenure as head of Columbia Pictures marks new relationship between Hollywood and London's Wardour Street.

Platoon revives the genre of Vietnam films begun in the 1970s that continues into the 1990s.

September. Fox television network begins broadcasting.

1987

Goldcrest Films self-destructs.

David Puttnam leaves Columbia.

Fatal Attraction causes a sensation and sets the model for a new series of paranoid fantasies; the film is released with different endings in different markets, according to the way it tests.

March 1. DVI technology demonstrated at the second Microsoft CD-ROM conference. Although never successful in the market, it is the precursor of digital video.

Theater magnate Sumner Redstone purchases Viacom for a reported \$3.4 billion. Henry Hampton's *Eyes on the Prize*, broadcast on PBS, confirms the value of television as an historical medium.

Lethal Weapon (Mel Gibson, Danny Glover) and *Predator* (Arnold Schwarzenegger) make it clear that Action movies are now the dominant genre in American film. Computer RAM chips now hold 1 megabit (1,024 kilobits).

1988

Rupert Murdoch's Sky TV begins small-dish satellite-to-home broadcasting in the U.K., obviating the need to build a massive cable infrastructure.

Murdoch purchases *TV Guide* from Annenberg Communications for \$3 billion.

January. Sony purchases CBS Records for a reported \$2 billion.

February 18. Before this date people ask, "Do you have a fax?" After this date they demand, "What's your fax number?"

September. IBM-Sears joint venture Prodigy, an online service aimed at the general public, opens after reported \$500 million investment.

October. Turner founds TNT cable network, devoted to classic movies from his MGM library.

1989

John Cassavetes, Richard Roud, and Leslie Halliwell all die at the age of 59 marking the end of the modern period in film history.

Thatcher broadcasting deregulation bill passes the House of Commons.

Steve Ross merges Warner with Time Inc. The new company is the largest media group in the world.

June. The Chinese Tiananmen Square revolt is broadcast to a world audience.

November. Voyager's release of *CD Companion to Beethoven's 9th*, by Robert Winter, is a landmark in the development of multimedia.

November. Sony purchases Columbia Pictures Entertainment (Columbia Pictures, TriStar Pictures, and Loews Theaters) from Coca-Cola for a reported \$3.4 billion, then pays \$200 million for the Guber-Peters Entertainment company so that the two principles can run the studio.

resigns from Fox. By the end of the year, after a tour of the
e will find himself in the home shopping business.
retires from the *Tonight Show* after nearly 30-year run.
o CD product, which—unlike Sony's Mavica—allows con-
to keep their huge investment in chemical film technology
ne benefits of digital recording.

t Altman's return to form as it effectively satirizes the film
es and nineties that kept him off the screen.

alone announces his company, TCI, is developing a 500-
logy that would allow movies on demand. (Is it a ploy?)

isc player using small CDs and advanced technology.

ne first animated film to be nominated for an Academy

e.

of American political figures *JFK* and *Malcolm X* are contro-

novel by E. M. Forster, will garner nine Academy Award
Oscar for Emma Thompson, marking the resurgence of the

network financial interest in syndication operations

CD release of *A Hard Day's Night* is the first digital CD to

sets box-office record while his *Schindler's List* wins Oscars.

es the Newton, one of the first Personal Digital Assistants.

and Windows versions of NCSA Mosaic browsers are

vide Web begins its rapid rise.

e-2-One, first PCS service, in London.

rol of Star TV, satellite system which reaches most coun

First review of a multimedia CD in *The New York Times Book Review*.

The Fox network lands a one-two punch on CBS, first by outbidding the older network for National Football League broadcast rights, then by enticing 12 major-market affiliates to switch allegiance.

February. After a high-stakes competition lasting several years, the HDTV Grand Alliance (and by extension, the FCC) chooses a digital HDTV system designed by Zenith and AT&T as the standard for the proposed U.S. system, leapfrogging existing Japanese analog technology and setting the stage for the next stages of digitization.

March. Media magnate Silvio Berlusconi wins Italian parliamentary elections and becomes Prime Minister. He is the first media mogul to head a major country.

March. Digital Satellite System (DSS) direct-to-home broadcasting begins in the U.S.

April. Apple introduces a new line of Power Macintosh computers built around the PowerPC chip (designed by Apple, IBM, and Motorola), first RISC microprocessor in the PC environment.

IBM introduces new optical disc storage technology that can increase CD-ROM capacity more than tenfold.

April. Disney top executive Frank Wells dies in helicopter crash.

May. Book-of-the-Month Club offers first CD-ROM title, Ron Mann's *Poetry in Motion*.

May. Godard's still at it. His autobiographical *JLG* by *JLG* premieres.

August. Jeffrey Katzenberg resigns from Disney in a dispute over succession.

Within days, he is in business with Steven Spielberg and David Geffen. The company, intending to be a full studio operation, is later named Dreamworks SKG.

September. Sumner Redstone's Viacom completes purchase of Wayne Huizenga's Blockbuster Video, largest retail video chain.

TCI-Bell Atlantic merger talks fizzle. The first telco-entertainment conglomerate will have to wait.

This year, sales of encyclopedias on CD-ROM exceed sales in print for the first time.

December 22. Berlusconi loses his post as Prime Minister of Italy, under the threat of an indictment, which comes in May. (He is not the first media mogul to be indicted.)

1995

January. Sony/Philips and Toshiba/Time Warner introduce competing technologies for Digital Video Discs, storing 3.7 and 4.8 gigabytes, respectively.

February 2. Before this date, people ask, "Do you have electronic mail?" After this date, they inquire, "What's your email?"

May. Apple releases QuickTime VR technology for simple, inexpensive virtual-reality productions.

June. Edgar Bronfman Jr concludes Seagram's purchase of the 80 percent of MCA/Universal owned by Matsushita. After negotiations with Michael Ovitz fall through, Bronfman hires CAA's number two, Ron Meyer, to head his studio.

July. Michael Eisner announces that Disney will purchase Capital Cities/ABC for

NBC—was not in play. Shortly after, Eisner announces that he has hired Michael Ovitz as his second-in-command.

August. It's thunder stolen by the Disney/ABC deal, Westinghouse announces the purchase of CBS for \$5.4 billion. Ted Turner—actively pursuing the former Tiffany broadcast network since the early 1980s—loses out once again, thwarted by the cable interests on his board.

August 9. Netscape's initial public offering, 14 months after the company's founding, is the most successful in history, emblematic of Internet mania. At the end of the first day of trading, the market values the company at \$2.9 billion. It has yet to make a profit.

August 24. Microsoft introduces its Windows 95 software after an eighteen-month marketing campaign and with worldwide publicity.

September. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Unable to expand by acquisition, Turner sells out to Time Warner for \$7.5 billion, noting, perhaps ironically, "I'm tired of being little all the time. I'm nearing the end of my career. I want to see what it's like to be big for a while."

September. The Sony/Philips group essentially concedes to the Time Warner/Toshiba group on a standard for Digital Video Disc/High Density Compact Disc, assuring a single format for the new medium with a maximum capacity of 18.8 gigabytes. Combining the proposed dual-layer and double-sided technologies assures the backward compatibility the computer industry needs (Sony/Philips) with the high capacity the entertainment industry wants (Time Warner/Toshiba).

November 27. Moving closer to the Hollywood orbit, Barry Diller announces the purchase of Savoy Pictures Entertainment Inc. and Home Shopping Network for his new venture, Silver King Communications, a chain of television stations.

November 29. A small company named Pixar Animation Studios goes public just a few days after its first production, *Toy Story*, is released by Disney, garnering the top box-office rank for the Thanksgiving weekend. The company is 80 percent-owned by Steven Jobs. By the end of the day the combination of 1995's technology bubble and Hollywood glitz makes Jobs's stake in Pixar worth more than \$1 billion—far more than his Apple stock was ever worth. *Toy Story* is the first fully computer-animated feature, but it seems a high price to pay for a small production company with an onerous three-picture deal.

December 13. Spielberg, Katzenberg, and Geffen announce that Dreamworks SKG will take over an old Hughes aircraft plant north of Los Angeles International Airport to build the first major studio lot in more than half a century. It is the site where Howard Hughes built his famous "Spruce Goose," and includes a huge hangar that is slated to house six sound stages.

December 14. NBC sells Microsoft a 50-percent stake in one of its cable channels to create a news network to challenge CNN, further cementing the union between the computer and media industries.

Sense and Sensibility (starring Emma Thompson) and *Persuasion* (with her sister Sophie) together with the BBC/A&E series *Pride and Prejudice* mark the curious Jane Austen craze of the midnineties.

1996

- Telecommunications Act of 1996. Meant to liberalize the restrictions placed on telecommunications companies over the years (beginning with the Communications Act of 1934), the new code lifts limits on radio and television station ownership, permits cable and phone companies to compete in each other's industries, and frees the "baby Bells" from the constraints imposed by the breakup of the Bell system in 1984. Almost immediately, four of the Regional Bell Operating Companies announce mergers (SBC Communications with Pacific Telesis; NYNEX with Bell Atlantic). At the same time what remains of AT&T splits itself into three new companies and, in the U.K., the merger of British Telecom and Mercury falls apart. Misunderstanding the dynamics of large telecom corporations, the U.S. Congress has given them a license to raid and consolidate when it intended, rather, to increase competition.
- March 9. George Burns dies at 100, and with him the traditional vaudeville style of the early years of the twentieth century which gave birth to the dominant form of American mass entertainment.
- March 25. Like a scene out of Fellini, a badly crippled Superman is displayed to an international television audience on the annual Oscars telecast. Christopher Reeve had been seriously injured when thrown by a horse the summer before. A few weeks later, Lois Lane (Margot Kidder) is found wandering dazed and injured in Los Angeles. The symbolism is meaningless, as the series had played itself out years earlier.
- May 31. Timothy Leary, the erstwhile guru of the sixties, dies peacefully at home in bed surrounded by family. His publicized plan to stage his death on the World Wide Web is unfulfilled.
- July 15. MSNBC, first combined cable network/website, begins broadcasting (and netcasting). The deal gets Microsoft on TV and NBC on the Internet.
- July 16. After months of lackluster bidding, Crédit Lyonnais sells MGM for \$1.3 billion to a group led by none other than Kirk Kerkorian (who hadn't even been in the running). Kerkorian's group includes Frank Mancuso, MGM's chairman, and Seven Network Group, Ltd., an Australian broadcasting company owned in part by News Corporation. It is the third time Kerkorian has bought the company.
- July 19. The Centennial Olympiad opens in Atlanta (and on NBC). The official website, managed by IBM, is an integral part of the event. IBM loses face by failing to deliver the scores as quickly and accurately as promised, but succeeds in demonstrating a new medium: the "Sneak Peak Cam" area of the site offers instant stills grabbed every few seconds from the video world feed from dozens of cameras at nearly every venue. Because NBC has orchestrated its television broadcast to succeed as entertainment (delaying transmission of daytime events to prime time), IBM's site is, as analyst Andrew Monaco points out, "just about the only way you can see the Olympics live." The Sneak Peak Cam ironically fulfills the promise of NBC's failed "Triplecast" at the Barcelona Olympic Games four years earlier and suggests a vital role for the Web as a telepresence medium.
- July 27. At the Atlanta Olympics, a Finnish javelin thrower gets a rare "do-over" as her javelin hits the skycam. The event marks the continuing struggle between sports and media.
- September 30. British Telecom

- lier failed in an attempt to buy its main domestic competitor Cable and Wireless PLC.
- October. The introduction of the WebTV receiver begins the merger of broadcast television with multicast Internet. Computer and television manufacturers settle their battle over the new digital television standard by agreeing to differ: computers will use progressive scanning while televisions will offer both progressive and interlaced scanning.
- October. Deutsche Telekom convinces Germans, traditionally wary of the stock market, to buy its stock in its first public offering.
- October 8. John Calley, highly respected studio executive at Warner in the 1970s, takes the reigns at troubled Sony Pictures Entertainment. He had recently returned to Hollywood from retirement to rescue United Artists.
- October 31. Marcel Carné dies at 90, still without the respect from French critics that he thought he deserved for *Les Enfants du Paradis*.
- November. DVD players come to market in Japan.
- December 20. Marcello Mastroianni dies at 72. His body lies in state on the Campodoglio in Rome. Thousands mourn this epitome of the Italian postwar spirit as the public funeral concludes with the final march tune from *8 1/2*.
- December 20. Carl Sagan dies at 62. Over a 25-year period, the Astronomy professor from Cornell had used the popular media—especially television—aggressively and adroitly to share his love of the science, setting a model for mass education.
- December 20. Apple buys NeXT Software Inc. for \$400 million and Steve Jobs returns to the company he cofounded.

1997

- January 12. Thousands celebrate the birthday of HAL, the computer star of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Later in the year, continuing troubles on the MIR space station suggest Arthur C. Clarke and Stanley Kubrick will prove to be as unsuccessful in their prognostications as George Orwell was.
- March. DVD-Video sales begin in the U.S.
- March. CBS cuts a deal with Web site SportsLine. Web company gets promotional announcements during CBS sports programming; CBS gets 50 percent of revenue from SportsLine content tied to CBS-covered events and 3 million shares of stock. Over the next three years CBS makes a dozen other deals like this one, trading leftover ad space and time for significant chunks of Internet companies.
- March 30. Channel 5 begins broadcasting in the U.K.
- April 29. Metromedia announces the sale of its 2,200-film library, along with the remains of Orion Pictures and Goldwyn Entertainment to the new MGM. After the deal is completed, MGM—near death two years earlier—will control the world's largest film library.
- July 1. Robert Mitchum dies at 80, leaving Jimmy Stewart as the last remaining Hollywood icon from the great days of the 1940s.
- July 2. Jimmy Stewart dies at 89.
- July. The landing of the Mars Pathfinder probe proves a significant even in Web

August 30. The melodramatic death of Diana, Princess of Wales, quickly becomes a media event of supernova proportions, as television networks, newspapers, and magazines fall over each other rushing to condemn the networks, newspapers, and magazines who profited from her celebrity, while the outpouring of grief in the U.K. is hailed as a landmark of the new British sensibility, and the Web is crowded with surfers looking to glean any piece of information about the event or chat about their feelings.

September. Internet growth continues at an extreme rate as surveys show 26 million host computers on the net now, up from 15 million a year earlier.

September 20. Continuing a wave of media mergers and acquisitions, Westinghouse announces the purchase of 98 radio stations from American Radio Systems, bringing its total holdings to 175 stations. (So much for the "competition" promised by the Telecom Act of 1996.)

October. Upstart telecom entrepreneur Bernard Ebbers's Worldcom outbids British Telecom and acquires MCI. A month earlier Worldcom had acquired the CompuServe network.

October 21. Barry Diller is still at it. He announces the purchase of a couple of cable channels and nearly all of Universal's television production facilities for \$4.1 billion.

October 28. Paul Jarrico, screenwriter, producer, and hero of the Hollywood Blacklist period, dies at 82 driving home from a ceremony marking the fiftieth anniversary of the HUAC hearings.

October 30. Sam Fuller dies at 85, last of the classical Hollywood auteurs.

December 21. James Cameron's *Titanic* opens. Produced for a record \$200 million, this old-fashioned grand-hotel story proves a landmark in the short history of digital filmmaking, as the prodigious technology is used, not to create a striking fantasy, but to re-create historical reality. Roberto Rossellini rests a little easier in his grave, knowing that his dream of thirty years earlier is being fulfilled.

1998

January 21. The Monica Lewinsky soap opera begins. It will dominate the media-sphere for the next thirteen months.

April. Walt Disney, minority owner in new-media creator Starwave Corp., exercises option to acquire the rest of the company from founder Paul Allen. (Through its own joint ventures, Starwave creates content for and produces ABCnews.com, ESPN SportsZone, and other new-media sites.)

May 14. Frank Sinatra dies at 85. Uniquely successful as the paramount singer of his era as well as a prolific and successful film actor, his persona remains the transcendent emblem of popular romantic sentiment for a century that will have to limp along for another nineteen months without him.

June. AT&T announces it will purchase John Malone's Tele-Communications, Inc. for \$31.8 billion, uniting the number one long-distance company with the number two cable provider, as C. Michael Armstrong

June 19. Disney joins the rush to the Web, buying a significant stake in Infoseek with the intent of creating a Disney-controlled portal. Disney trades Starwave to Infoseek for \$475 million.

August 15. Apple "Interim CEO" Steve Jobs continues his winning streak with the introduction of the i-Mac, a new version of the computer-as-appliance he defined fifteen years earlier. (Over the next few months the bluish machine will earn considerably more than *A Bug's Life*, the concurrent product from Jobs's other company, Pixar.)

August 17. In the climactic episode of the Lewinsky saga, President Clinton testifies before the grand jury via a secure video feed. On September 21, the House Judiciary committee broadcasts the tape of the testimony to the nation. Within a week, the four-hour episode is available on DVD for a price of 2 cents (plus \$2 shipping and handling).

October 1. Digital television broadcasting begins in the U.K., via satellite.

October 2. The campfire is out; the last roundup has ended: Gene Autry rides off into the final sunset, Roy Rogers having predeceased him by three months. Don't fence them in.

October 19. The age of the Bills crests as the Microsoft antitrust trial begins. The other Bill will be vindicated at the polls, impeached by the House, tried by the Senate, and acquitted long before this Bill's tribulations end next year. Like the Clinton affair, the Gates trial will depend on videotaped testimony and weak memories.

November 1. Digital television broadcasting begins in the U.S. but no one notices. Due to a slight oversight, cable systems are not ready to carry the signals. HDTV sets still cost \$10,000. The first network broadcast, on ABC is Disney's *101 Dalmatians* (the 1996 remake).

November 7. Barnes & Noble, the nation's largest book chain, declares it will buy Ingram Book Group, the largest book wholesaler. (Antitrust concerns will halt the deal within six months.)

November 19. Alan J. Pakula dies at 70 in a freak auto accident as a pipe smashes through his windshield on the Long Island Expressway.

November 23. America Online announces it will buy Netscape for about \$4 billion in stock. Don't cry for Netscape shareholders: by the time the deal is concluded months later the AOL stock will be worth \$10 billion.

December. Michael Ovitz returns to Hollywood, forming Artists Management Group and riling his former associates at CAA. Meanwhile, his Broadway production company, Livent, is in bankruptcy—but he says that's Garth Drabinsky's fault.

It has been the year of seeing double: two World War II epics (*Saving Private Ryan*, *The Thin Red Line*); two Elizabethan pageants (*Shakespeare in Love*, *Elizabeth*); two meteoric disasters (*Armageddon*, *Deep Impact*); and two buggy digital cartoons (*Antz*, *A Bug's Life*).

1999

- The euro is introduced as the transnational currency of the European Union.
- January 7. MGM completes the purchase of the Polygram library from Universal. In a remarkable comeback the once moribund studio now owns rights to more than half the extant Hollywood library.
- January 20. Cable Internet service provider @Home announces purchase of portal/search engine Excite for \$6.7 billion. Deals this small no longer garner much attention.
- February 20. Gene Siskel dies at 53. Since the early 1980s he and his television co-host Roger Ebert have dominated American film criticism.
- Rise of ECNs—"Electronic Communications Networks" that provide a virtual marketplace for financial transactions.
- March 7. After completing post-production work on *Eyes Wide Shut*, his first feature in twelve years, Stanley Kubrick dies peacefully in his sleep at 70 at his home in Hertfordshire, which he loved.
- March 21. Miramax's *Shakespeare in Love* wins the best picture Oscar beating industry favorite Dreamworks SKG's *Saving Private Ryan*, and punctuating a remarkable string of recent Oscars for the outsider ministudio. Some observers think the little film beat the big film because it worked better on video—which is how most Academy members now see most movies.
- April 9. The British government blocks Rupert Murdoch's \$1 billion purchase (through B-Sky-B) of Manchester United, the premiere British soccer club. Murdoch may console himself with his other sports prize, The Los Angeles Dodgers.
- May 7. The British government announces that they will sell 58 percent of the country's gold bullion reserves: the announcement is a milestone of the growing virtual economy.
- May 19. *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace* debuts. The return of George Lucas to the series after sixteen years is marked by such anticipation in geek circles that some Silicon Valley companies declare a culture holiday. (No one was going to go to work this day anyway.)
- May 21. Deutsche Telekom loses its bid for Telecom Italia. The much smaller Olivetti wins the prize. Nationalism plays a part in the decision as the euro is not yet triumphant.
- May. The summer movie season will be devoted to gross-out humor as *Austin Powers—The Spy Who Shagged Me* leads the way. The fall television season will follow suit.
- June 18. Lucas and Fox test digital projections of *The Phantom Menace* in suburban theaters in New York and Los Angeles. A month earlier 79-year-old Eric Rohmer beat them to it with a digital showing of his short "Cambrure" at the Cannes Film Festival.
- June 28. The Secure Digital Music Initiative, a recording industry consortium charged with finding a way to protect the value of the industry's intellectual property against the pirate challenge of MP3 and other digital music formats, announces its specification. Musical hackers are unimpressed.
- June. Digital hard-disc-based "Personal Video Recorders" go on the market. Will the 25-year-old dream of time-shifting finally become a reality? And where is the "Secure Digital Film/Television Initiative"?

- July 3. Mario Puzo dies at 78. His *Godfather* remains a key element of the late twentieth-century mythos.
- July 13. Disney announces it will merge its own Internet holdings with Infoseek and spin off the resulting company. They aren't the first to try this ploy. The idea is to provide a pure Internet play and use the windfall from the hugely inflated sales of stock in such a company to make acquisitions that may help eventually to realize the market valuation!
- July 15. Robert A. Daly and Terry Semel announce that they will step down as heads of Warner after nearly twenty years in power.
- July 17. Bill Gates is now worth \$100 billion, as Microsoft stock passes \$500 billion in market value.
- September 7. CBS and Viacom announce a \$37 billion merger. It is the largest deal yet in the media world. The new company will be the second-largest media group (after Time Warner, but ahead of Disney/ABC). The deal was made possible when the FCC relaxed rules about television station ownership earlier in the summer. For those few who remember that CBS was sold to Westinghouse a mere four years previously for \$5.4 billion, the price is shocking. Has the company really increased in value almost seven times in four years? In a word: yes, sort of—at least as measured by the virtual economics of the end of the century. Here's what happened: after Westinghouse acquired CBS in 1995, management set out to divest itself of the old Westinghouse real-industry businesses, which it largely accomplished within three years. In 1997 Westinghouse changed its name to CBS, which made sense, since it had just sold the old Westinghouse businesses and all that was left were the CBS businesses, plus a few media-industry acquisitions. The most valuable of these was Infinity Broadcasting, a chain of radio stations. With Infinity came CEO Mel Karmazin, a rising star who quickly seized power and talked Sumner Redstone into the deal. Basically, the difference between the \$5.4-billion CBS and the \$37-billion CBS is some radio stations, better "positioning," and Karmazin. If that seems strange to you, then you will probably enjoy Joseph Heller's *Closing Time*, the sequel to *Catch-22*. Although written in the 1980s it catches the fin-de-siècle dizziness perfectly. Musing about a world he doesn't understand, listing one absurdity after another, our old friend Yossarian concludes with the ultimate incongruity:

Men made millions, producing nothing more substantial than changes in ownership.

"And that's the way it is...."