**Adjusting to Films with sound**

Hollywood films with sound are quite new to film makers. They were used to their slapstick comedy that acquired skilled actors that were capable of using their body language. But in **1926** sound was starting to be incorporated into films! It was a big deal. Comedy could be created by speech rather than actions. At first, the films contained a lot of static because the actors had to speak into a static microphone, this was one of the problems. Along with the camera work that directors had been improving for 30 years to enhance the camera movement. It was no longer in the films with sound.

**Time Line of Achievements in Cinema**

**1926:** The Warner Brothers figured out how to sync recorder sound to a motion picture. In parts, the film might seem choppy, and that was because the actors and filmmakers alike were still adjusting to it.

An early example would be “The Jazz Singer” Starring Al Johnson, directed by Alan Crosland.

( show clip)

**Description:** The main character (Jakie Rabinowitz played by Al Johnson) has a very strong bond with his mother and loves to play jazz music from the age of 13. His father (Cantor Rabinowitz) does not approves of this so called jazz music so Jakie decides to run away from home and escape the Jewish traditions. Ten years later, he changed his name to Jack Robin and has become a very talented Jazz performer. He befriends a woman names Mary Dale, she helps him with his career. Jack goes to see his family again so that he can explain his passion for modern music. His father banishes him from ever setting foot in his house ever again. Not long after that, Cantor becomes terribly sick and Jack is forced to choose between jazz and his family. The father forgives him just before he passes away.

**Observation:** The camera work is mostly focused on the center of the action in the scenes. Jack’s voice is always much louder than his soft spoken mother’s voice. At some points the voices are difficult to understand, but decent quality for the time period. The key lighting included the stage lights and ceiling lights, filler lights were lamps, and back lights were candles. The make up in The Jazz Singer was over dramatic, the actors were always covered with a heavy layer of foundation, eye liner, blush and lip gloss. At parts, it may appear that Jack isn’t even actually playing the piano.

**Analysis:** It is very obvious that Al Johnson was a skilled stage actor and it was quite effective for his character Jack because he was a Jazz performer who was used to being on stage. His body language and facial expressions were always on cue in all the scenes. This film is easy for citizens to understand and relate to after seeing the struggle of not fitting in in one’s own family. It happens every day.

**Evaluation**: The Jazz Singer was the first motion picture to last more than 40 minutes. It has won awards such as: Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Engineering Effects, The Producer Darryl F. Zanuck won an Academy Award, in 1996 it was selected for preservation in United States Library of Congress’s Nationals Film Registry, and in 1998 it was chosen for the American Film Institute. The Jazz Singer was a very popular in 1927, and still has songs that we hear to this day.

**1933:** One device that really helped actors to be heard clearly on film, was the “Boom Microphone” invented by **Dorothy Arzner**, who was the only female director. You see, some actors were not able to adjust to films with sound because they were so used to applying their body language and facial expressions to portray the situation and how they’re are feeling. And by using their voices to do that as well, it was more difficult. What Dorothy Arzner wanted to accomplish by using her Boom Mic, was to allow actors to continue using motion in “motion pictures” Make sense?

[](http://www.setcelebs.com/img/dorothy-arzner-04.html)

**1935:** The **Magnetophon** tape recorder was unvented by **Fritz Pfleumer**. This is a reel to reel tape recording system where the medium is held on a reel instead of being contained in a cassette. The Magnetophon was the first tape recorder to use magnetic tape that was able to preserve the exact sound of voice and music. In fact, the Magnetophon was at Mozart’s 39th Symphony during their 1936 concert tour recording the whole thing.

[](http://www.google.ca/imgres?imgurl=https://www.basf.com/images/corp/about-us/history/1925-1944/magnetophone_m_4-3.jpg-renditions/cq5dam.web.4-3.6.jpg&imgrefurl=https://www.basf.com/en/company/about-us/history/1925-1944.html&h=417&w=555&tbnid=W8ef2v9_L4cV5M:&zoom=1&docid=2tTXDe7ldgyUMM&ei=XkD3VK_XNc6HyATvhILYCQ&tbm=isch&ved=0CCQQMygIMAg)

In **1936**, a new and improved model was created by **Valdemar Poulsen**, first introduced in Germany. It included new feature like a plastic based tape which was much lighter, easier to use and less expensive. That’s always a bonus.

**1940: Walt Disney** made history! They created the first film with a four track soundtrack which is recorded from eight channels. The film is called Fantasia. It became very popular especially in the younger aged crowds.

( show clip)

( clip analysis)

**Now for a little history…**

During the late 1920s, approximately 110 000 000 movie tickets were sold each week. Sound in movies was very popular with the citizens. It was common for families to go to the movies two or three times a week if they could afford it. People loved to go to the movies because it provided an escape from the real life chaos and just take a break. Most movies were still in black and white due to the expensive cost of color films.

On the other hand, in the 1930s, when then great depression started, families couldn’t afford to go to the movies anymore. Even though more than 1/3 of movie theatres had to close down due to the lack of income, 60-80 000 000 movie tickets were being purchased. For film makers, it was difficult to create films, reason being that the government had control of the black and white and colored films.