

Nick Zegarac's
THE *Hollywood* **ART**

PREMIERE ISSUE

*D*efining the corporate identity of the *M*ajors

FOXY LOGOS

How the big time Hollywood studios made a name for themselves

by Nick Zegarrac

Hollywood didn't invent the concept of mass marketing, though it might as well have. The infancy of America's film-making was a potpourri of independent producers and makeshift production companies – modestly budgeted, ragtag stock companies, forming and dissolving partnerships virtually overnight and experimental at best.

In fine tuning the process of making movies into an assembly line of creative productivity however, the real golden age (1929-59) in Hollywood was as much about creating and maintaining a corporate entity as it became about creating the greatest product to compete against the next studio. It seems inconceivable now, but at their zenith each dream factory then cranked out an average of 52 movies a year with mind-boggling speed and an ever-increasing reliance on new technological advances. How best, then, to distinguish one studio's product from another? Why, by the invention of a corporate trademark, of course.

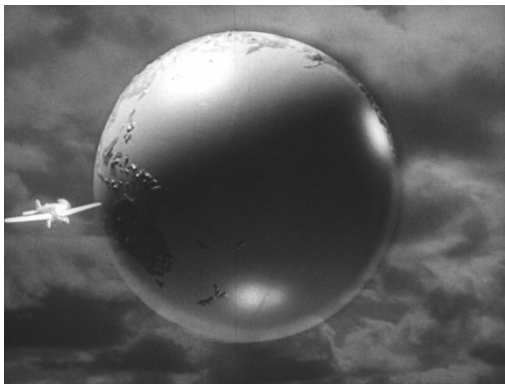
In hindsight it seems prolific that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the studio that would eventually encompass "more stars than there are in heaven" should choose a roaring lion as its trademark in 1924. Sound films were still five years down the road and even MGM's wunderkind, VP in Charge of Production – Irving Thalberg, had failed to accurately assess sound's usefulness.

Nevertheless, with theater chain Loewe's Incorporated's acquisition of Metro Pictures, The Goldwyn Picture Corp. and Louis B. Mayer Productions in the mid-20s, the creation of a new corporate identity to usher in this fledgling amalgam of talents and facilities fell to the responsibility of studio publicist Howard Dietz and Arthur Loewe. It was Loewe who would suggest a roaring lion framed in strips of celluloid – reminiscent of the old Goldwyn logo, but with the motto 'ars gratia artis' (or art for art's sake) to precede all subsequent movies made at this new studio. Leo – the MGM lion - has been roaring ever since.

(At right, top: The widescreen incarnation of 20th Century-Fox's studio logo first debuting in 1954 and its accompanying 'Cinemascope Production' title card set against a curtain – later rechristened 'Cinemascope Picture' (second from top) and matted against the same deep blue sky as the logo itself.

Fox began renting out its Cinemascope process to other studios and the result was a series of creative designs advertised as 'of' or 'in' the anamorphic process. Middle: a revised 'scope' trademark to introduce Cinemascope 55; a sharper filmic process with a new lens manufactured by Bausch & Lomb. The process was only used for two movies: The King and I and Carousel. Bottom two: Paramount's Cinemascope credit from The High & The Mighty, and MGM's Cinemascope credit from Love Me Or Leave Me.)





(Above: around the world with Universal – the studio whose logo has had the most transmutations over the last 100 years. The late silent and early sound era films produced at Universal City were preceded by slow rotating globe with a biplane flying the circumference of the equator. By the mid-1930s, the influence of art deco style caused Universal to revamp its trademark to that of a shiny glass sphere tilted on its axis and surrounded by a vista or glittery rotating glass stars.

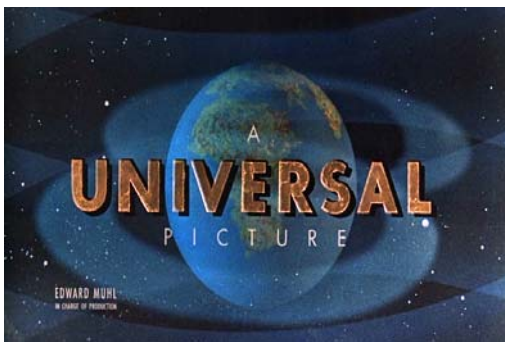
The acquisition of Universal by International in 1950 necessitated the inclusion of the latter's affiliation – rather prominently displayed on a somewhat less impressive rotating world with fewer pin pricks of light as a backdrop. International's sell off of Universal in 1959 resulted in a revised logo yet again, this one bearing the name of new studio VP – Edward Muhl in the lower left corner.

With Muhl's departure mid-60s his name was removed from that logo, though the revised trademark consisting of odd swirling translucent rings remained a main staple until the late 1980s. Throughout this latter period, this logo would occasionally not precede movies distributed by the studio – a variety of title cards merely bearing the words 'A Universal Release' preceding movies made between 1965-1985.



Then, in 1988, Universal premiered its most daring revision of the trademark to date; opening with a close-up on gigantic gold letters spelling 'Universal' before panning away to reveal the earth spinning majestically against a realistic outer space backdrop. This logo would remain in tact until 2000 when, for some inexplicable reason, Universal – owned and operated by MCA Talent Agency for over two decades – adopted the less than spectacular Home Video logo of a camera panning across the top of an ominously multi-colored globe for all subsequent theatrical releases as well.

Interestingly, changes were also made to the soundtrack that accompanied these various mutations: only the noise of a biplane's propellers in the first instance; followed by a memorable trombone fanfare for the mid-30s deco incarnation; main title scoring of the movie soundtrack overlapping for the International releases, a silent globe during the Muhl regime; the swish of a starburst immediately followed by a lucid and dreamy few bars of fanfare strangely reminiscent of weightlessness during the 1990s, and finally a bombastic full orchestral fanfare with pounding drums for the adopted home video cum theatrical revision currently preceding all movies distributed by the company.)



Yet, what is it that makes a studio trademark memorable, indelible and beloved? By 1933, movie audiences in theaters across the country were spontaneously bursting into applause as soon as Leo appeared – even before the title credits rolled. Leo the lion became synonymous with MGM's prestige, just as the Warner shield became strangely symbolic of that studio's gritty crime movies and

In the years to come, similar cheers would reverberate when other identifiable trademarks gradually began to take on a life of their own – virtually defining for the audience the type of movie they were about to see.



It may have been the foresight of Production Chief Darryl F. Zanuck – resigned to combating the invasion of television with a 'bigger is better' mentality - that ushered in the second and most successful coming of widescreen movies with the now fondly remembered 'Cinemascope' trademark in the mid-1950s. However, it was Zanuck's shortsightedness at the inception of creation that resulted in the naming of his studio as an amalgam of 20th Century Pictures



(Above: Fox then vs. Fox now. With the exception of multicolored arch lamps substituted by clear and the inclusion of the News Corporation Company logo at the bottom, not much has changed. Right: the Fox logo in Technicolor and B&W as it appeared intermittently during the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s. Below: the briefly toyed with Fox Searchlight logo appearing sporadically on film product distributed during the late 1990s.)

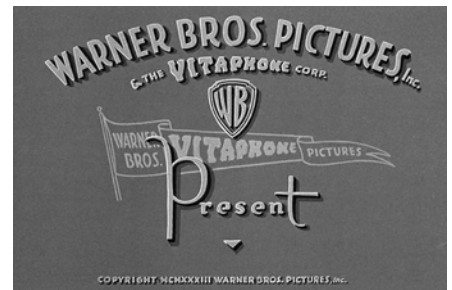
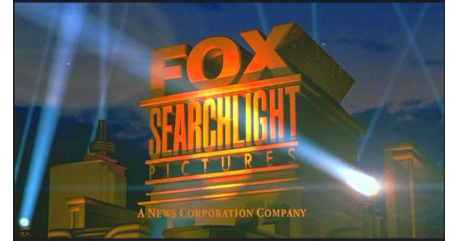
Corporation and Fox Films. 20th Century-Fox in the mid-30s must have seemed like a fresh and progressive moniker. The century was still young. However, with the dawn of the 21st century, the studio has been faced with a modest conundrum; does 20th suggest a company behind the times? In 1996, the studio briefly toyed with alterations to their galvanic deco trademark; its giant 2-0 atop a podium surrounded by searchlights virtually unchanged – with minor exceptions - throughout the last 70+ years.

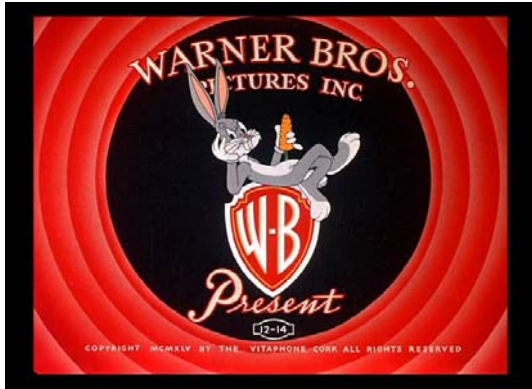
The first suggestion – to change 20th to 21st never went beyond the preliminary design stages. New Corp., the company that owns the studio today next tried several grand departures from the logo all together including Fox Searchlight and Fox Pictures 2000. In the final analysis, the powers that be chose instead to celebrate their illustrious past by reinstating the 20th Century-Fox logo with Alfred Newman's bombastic orchestral accompaniment to the Cinemascope tag first heard in all its' flourish in the mid-1950s. To accommodate for the absence of the Cinemascope title card – and hold the audience's attention – the Fox logo today opens with a computer generated camera swoop over the 20th logo and its flailing searchlights, the camera flying 360 degrees and finally framing the emblematic trademark at the exact angle as it appeared originally. Only the backdrop has been altered. Where once a brilliant deep blue sky accompanied the logo there is appears a vibrant sunset with encroaching night clouds seeping in on either side.

Other studio logos have fared worse for the wear because of their corporate sponsorship; the Warner Bros. shield being a prime example. The now famous W.B. had been first glimpsed in silhouette and accompanied by overlapping 'First National' and 'Vitaphone' trademarks; the former representing the American financial institution that provided initial loans necessary for the brothers Warner to launch their company, the latter an independent financier of early sound recording technologies that finally managed to convince the brothers that 'sound' had a future with the movies.

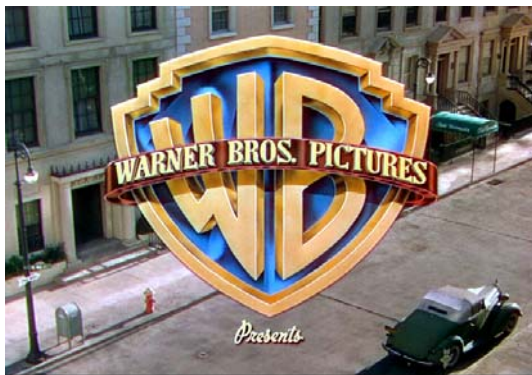
This transparent shield, slender and with an art deco 'WB' at the start of the 1930s was eventually elongated slightly horizontally and filled in with a solid backdrop for the remainder of the decade. In the mid-1940s, studio head Jack L. Warner added his producer's credit between the horizontal Warner Brothers Pictures banner and the word 'presents' to assert his personal authority over studio product. By the end of the decade, Warner's personal name was off the marquee and the shield was expanded to an even wider horizontal girth, achieving a level of plumpness during the brief heyday of 3-D, when the logo was completely redesigned to register outside of its 2-dimensional background.

In the mid-1960s Jack Warner finally lost control of the company (he had held on to his beloved studio longer than any of his contemporaries) and with his departure the



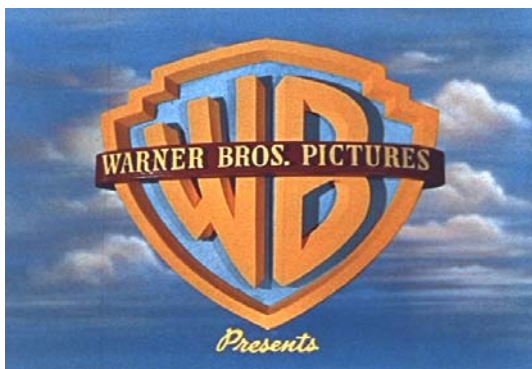


studio began a series of revolving alliances beginning with Seven Arts, which purchased the company outright in 1964 necessitating a name change to Warner Bros.-Seven Arts. The company was then acquired by Kinney Shoes and the Warner shield completely disappeared for more than a decade – replaced by an uninspired white symbol loosely identified as a ‘W’ and set against a black on red background.



Eventually, Kinney sold Warner Bros. to magazine publisher, Time and the company became Time/Warner – readopting the old Warner shield against a cloud filled blue sky – a backdrop first introduced in 1948 in B&W and later in Technicolor in 1952. The acquisition of internet provider AOL in 1993 briefly necessitated the inclusion of a footer beneath the shield that read ‘An AOL Time/Warner Company’ – dropped for the ‘75 Years of Entertaining the World’ split header in 1997 and not reappearing again after the anniversary celebration ended. Today, the Warner shield remains untarnished and restored to its relative form.

(Warner glory, top row: the shield as it appeared throughout most of the 1930s and early forties with few exceptions. Top right: one of the exceptions: the shield redressed and shot in Technicolor for Errol Flynn’s *The Adventures of Robin Hood* – 1938. The film was a prestige production, necessitating special treatment. The following year, the shield would receive similar treatment for the studio’s lavish *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* costarring Flynn and Bette Davis.



At left, the shield as resting post for the studio’s most celebrated animated creation, Bugs Bunny. The Warner shield, super-imposed over the background at the start of Hitchcock’s *Rope* – a Transcontinental Picture; in Warnercolor and 3-D for the debut of *House of Wax*.

3-D’s brief popularity meant that the shield would require yet another revision. Throughout the 1950s, the shield would resemble its late 30s incarnation, slightly more plump and in blazing Technicolor, often recessed from its traditional blue sky.

Below: corporate sponsorship from First Nation Bank necessitated the B&W title card (left) on virtually all of the studio’s early releases.

Below center: for some curious reason, the Warner shield was rarely seen in its standard form in Technicolor in the 1940s. This rare exception was photographed for the studio’s release of *Night & Day* – a lugubrious musical costarring Cary Grant and Alexis Smith.

Below right: the Warner shield as it was most often seen during the 1950s, majestically hanging before a frothy blue sky with billowy white clouds.



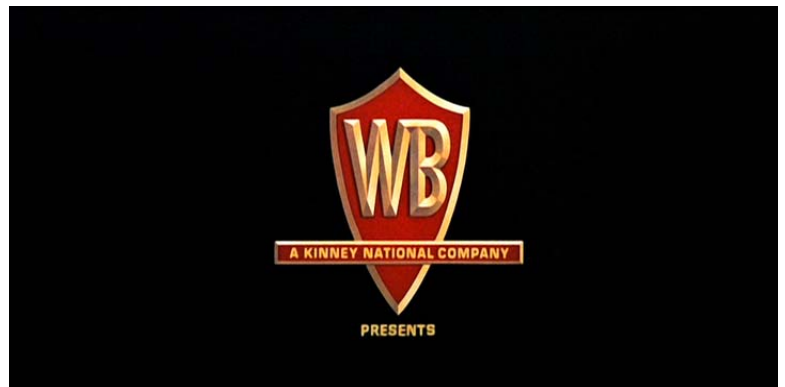


More Warner glory: Warner widescreen. In the mid-1950s Cinemascope revolutionized the presentation format of motion pictures. While the Fox studio logo – with its emphasis on horizontal lines – tended to look just as majestic in the new 2:35:1 aspect ratio the Warner shield, with its more vertical design – presented a slight problem in the reformatting. The studio cleverly disguised this awkwardness, usually by framing the shield in a sumptuous setting. Above left: taking center stage as the precursor to *Gypsy*. Above right: dwarfed by the Warner calligraphy and nestled amidst a cluster of carnation blooms for *My Fair Lady*.

Right: corporate sponsorship threatens the trademark. Warner's acquisition by Seven Arts Media resulted in a completely redesigned and far less impressive graphic logo that looked as though it were selling farm equipment machinery than escapist entertainment. Animated, the 'W' appeared first as though being written by a thick magic marker, followed by the shield and then the 'Warner/Seven Arts presents. Seven Arts brief association thankfully ensured that this lack luster redesign would not outlive the 1960s.



The acquisition of the studio by retail shoe giant Kinney in 1968 did not restore the Warner shield to its former glory. Instead, the company attempted yet another departure with this streamlined thin shield and raised gold lettering. The intrusive thin strip placed near its bottom gave little doubt as to where the money, or creative input on subsequent theatrical investments, was coming from.



The utterly uninspired Warner Communications Company logo as it appeared throughout the 1970s; removing the 'B' from the equation and incorporating a graphically stylized 'W' on a plain red background. In the 70s, Warner was in a struggle to regain its corporate identity and supremacy within the film making community. Not surprising, it turned its focus more to producing television series and came up with a real winner; *The Dukes of Hazzard*.



Below left: celebrating 75 years of entertaining the world. The studio kicked off its celebration with the theatrical release of some of its biggest money makers over decades. It also produced new Technicolor dye transfers for David O. Selznick's *Gone With the Wind* and MGM's *The Wizard of Oz* – both acquisitions of an internal sale from Ted Turner (who owned the RKO, MGM and Selznick film libraries).

Below right: The Warner shield as it appears today, a relatively throwback to the glory days that made the studio great. Jack Warner would be proud.





(Above and right: the standard bearer – Leo the Lion. In the intervening decades MGM, the studio that could boast ‘more stars than there are in heaven’, is no more, but the Dietz/Loewe trademark endures in one form or another – beckoning patrons as a rented intro to independently produced films or advertising a Disney based theme park in Florida and casinos across the country owned by Kirk Kerkorian, or perhaps most poignantly, reminding us of a greatness and an empire relegated to the annals of film history.

Above: Leo the first circa 1929. Leo in Technicolor, introducing a litany of frothy musicals from MGM’s golden age. Far right: Leo makes his animated debut, roaring before one of many Tom and Jerry cartoons produced by William Hanna and Joseph Barbara in the forties and early fifties. After MGM dissolved its animation division in the mid-1950s, Hanna and Barbara made the lucrative transition to television, redefining prime time with *The Flintstones* and later *The Jetsons* to name but two of their enduring cartoon characters.



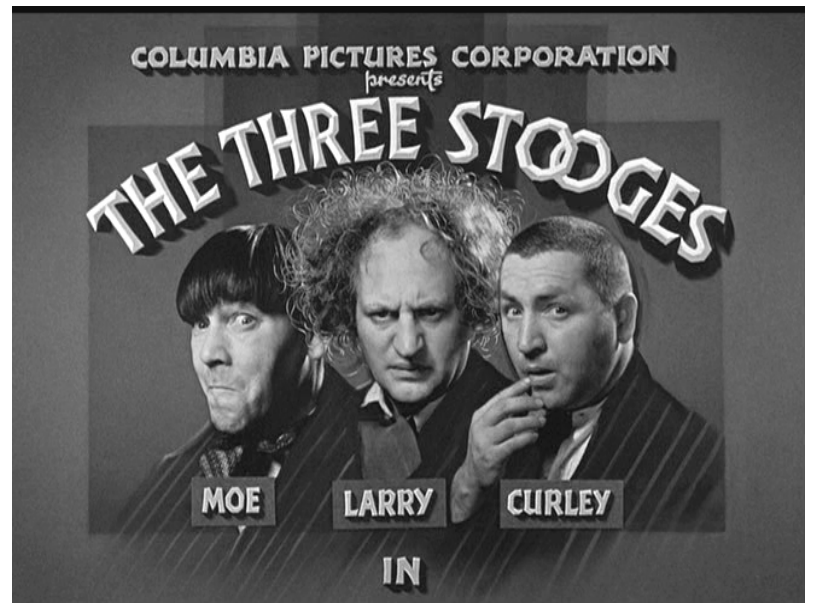
Right: an uncharacteristically silent Leo introduces the 1959 remake of *Ben-Hur*. MGM celebrated their silver anniversary in 1951 with this engraved invitation title card preceding all films released that year. Below right: a gross streamlining of the studio logo in 1964. Meant to be a permanent revision, purists were so outraged after the new logo preceded credits for Stanley Kubrick’s 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. The traditional logo was quickly reinstated. Today, this pale alternate appears only within the carpet patterns adorning Kerkorian’s various casinos around the world.



Below: the original lady and her torch that preceded all Columbia product made between 1930 and 1937. Few could assess then that her most enduring legacy would be marking the occasion when three loveably insane reprobates made their studio debut in the modestly budgeted ‘specialty short’ *Woman Haters*. In actuality, Moe, Larry and Curly had made their filmic debut at MGM, though that studio failed to accurately assess their potential. It took ‘poverty row’ Columbia to resurrect their careers and forever make the trio a household name.



In 1935 Columbia Studios, an impoverished incumbent to the big 3 in the industry (Warner, Fox and MGM), under maverick cutthroat Harry Cohn, took a major leap of faith with the impressively mounted – though disastrously received - *Lost Horizon* (released in 1936). It was a gamble Cohn could afford to take. With no money to acquire top star talent, the studio was virtually at the mercy of its more benevolent and powerful big brothers for loan outs. But mid-decade Cohn had discovered the unlikeliest of assets turned box office gold in a trio of Vaudeville comedians named Howard, Fine and Howard: *The Three Stooges*.





Over the decades, the Columbia lady would become more refined, more Victorian perhaps in her outward appearance, her Grecian features, draped American flag over one shoulder and crudely rendered torch sparks transcending into ethereal rays of apocalyptic starburst by the mid-1940s. In the early 1980s Columbia Studios attempted a move from Gower Street to the old MGM backlot that it would briefly share with Lorimar Telepictures.

An alliance with Rastar Productions in 1981 and TriStar Pictures in 1983 were only the latest in a line up of financial backers that initially included independent producer Same Spiegel's Horizon Pictures from 1954-66. However, after a brief lucrative period in the late 1970s and early '80s, Columbia's profits sank into the red and the studio became ripe for a corporate take over. It would finally become the property of electronics giant, Sony – a corporation whose current pioneering of Blu-Ray DVD's has become the standard bearer in the digital format.

Although a name in their own right, Sony wisely chose to maintain the Columbia brand for their film and home video distribution empires. They even went back to the drawing board in redesigning the studio's logo – briefly discarded in favor of a sunburst in 1981, but resurrected as a rather nondescript woman in an orange dress standing against a blue background for the rest of the decade. The current Columbia lady is very reminiscent of her predecessor from the 1940s, only in color and with a beautiful backdrop of rolling clouds at her side.

Paramount Studio's trademark of a mountain apex encircled by a wreath of stars has largely been maintained over the decades. Unlike other studios, Paramount began life as a distribution apparatus in the late 1920s. By the mid-1930s it was dabbling in its own productions, largely at the behest of chief stake holder Adolph Zukor whose number one asset was an alliance with director Cecil B. De Mille.

Zukor produced, De Mille directed and Paramount distributed – a handsome arrangement for all concerned. But by 1933 its other saleable commodity – a soprano named Jeanette MacDonald had departed the mountain for greener pastures at MGM and a galvanic film teaming with Nelson Eddy. Though Paramount tried, it never became the sort of in-house production facility that Warners or MGM did.

(Top: Columbia's lady in B&W, early Technicolor for the release of *Cover Girl* and (far top right) in its less than captivating 1980s reincarnation. Right: The Columbia logo revised by Sony, incorporating the past with a flare for the present and borrowing the same backdrop for its TriStar Pictures division. Three views of the Paramount mountain: an early concept refined in B&W. Note that the stars in the first example and the word 'Paramount' had been slightly raised by 1935; then, as photographed in Technicolor for the release of *Blue Skies*.)





In 1954, in an effort to combat 20th Century-Fox's supremacy with the development and distribution of Cinemascope to virtually every other studio in Hollywood, Paramount launched its own widescreen process – VistaVision. Unlike Cinemascope's squeezed photographic process, that tended to warp all vertical objects the further from center they were, VistaVision's larger format photography ran horizontally through the camera. It also produced a razor sharp image that the studio exploited with the moniker of 'motion picture high fidelity.'

Though audiences cheered VistaVision's debut in *White Christmas*, one of the few in-house Paramount products made that year and one of the biggest money makers of the decade, the process never caught on as the studio had hoped. Paramount continued to produce films in VistaVision throughout the '50s. Unfortunately, VistaVision's cumbersome projectors were not readily picked up by the theaters, forcing Paramount to reduction print the high resolution images to standard 35mm film with a decided loss in clarity before abandoning the process all together in the mid-1960s.

As with the fall of independence of other film companies, the mountain underwent a brief revision to a more graphic design after being acquired by natural gas giant, Gulf+Western in the mid-70s. In 1991 however, Paramount was sold to media conglomerate Viacom, a step in the right direction, as the latter restored the studio's trademark rural landscape, augmenting the static image with a computer generated halo of stars that appear to swoop down from the heavens to encircle the mountain top.

Like Columbia, RKO (short for Radio-Keith-Orpheum) had begun its existence on shaky ground and a poor bank balance. Initially an offshoot of a radio broadcasting syndicate, RKO came to prominence in the mid-1930s thanks largely to a chance alliance between contract player, Ginger Rogers and another of MGM's discards – Fred Astaire. Astaire had been a headliner with his sister Adele on Broadway but faired less well after Adele's retirement. Indeed, a talent scout's initial assessment of the dancer was "Can't act. Can't sing. Balding. Can dance...a little." That '...little' would turn into a lot for RKO after Astaire's teaming with Rogers in *Flying Down to Rio* (1933). With producer Pandro S. Berman as their star predominant behind the scenes, the duo effortlessly graced eight memorable movies in as many years at RKO.

However, when the team called it quits in 1939, RKO was suddenly left without a moneymaker to see the company through. Their first choice as replacement – wunderkind Orson Welles brought the studio's already precarious balance sheet to financial ruin with the release of *Citizen Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons* – two of the most impressive debuts in film history that tragically missed their audience mark. RKO then turned to the 'quick and dirty' method of making movies – employing writer/producer Val Lewton to create a series of horror movies that RKO hoped would rival Universal's supremacy in the genre.

Instead Lewton, whose aspirations were always more lofty than his studio gave him credit for, created high art from schlock nonsense; his films (*Cat People*, *I*





Walked With A Zombie, The Ghost Ship, The Body Snatcher) – both profitable and breathtakingly original – but generating friction with the new management under Howard Hughes who eventually fired Lewton and began to further sink the studio's balance sheet into the red.

By the end of the 1940s RKO was a relic of the past – a studio without product and prematurely driven to foreclosure. Thus, the RKO studio trademark remains relatively intact – a rotating radio tower atop the apex of the world and surrounded by clouds; the exception being in its accompanying titles. Whereas early releases from 1930-1933 simply bear the title 'A Radio Picture', latter product carries the more cumbersome 'An RKO Radio Picture Release.'



Another memorable, though brief regime was Selznick International Pictures. The brainchild of fastidious producer David O. Selznick – who spent his early years hopping from RKO to Paramount and later MGM and making enemies at virtually every studio – Selznick International was much more an homage to Selznick's own creative zeitgeist for meticulously crafted, superbly entertaining entertainments than it was a mass production house. Selznick's attention to detail would eventually become his studio's undoing – too much money spent to liberally to make the finest movies in the business; most unfortunately failing to recoup their initial investment. Selznick's facilities occupied a corner of the RKO backlot, dominated by a front office with a Southern colonial façade that Selznick chose to incorporate into his studio's trademark.

The introduction to a Selznick movie begins with the fade up on a wooden placard hanging in the wind. Early writing on the placard simply reads 'The Selznick Studio,' though Selznick would alter this credit to read 'A Selznick International Presentation' for 1939's *Gone With The Wind*. From here, amidst a flurry of bells that melt into an ominous few bars of fanfare, the camera drops below the placard to reveal the studio's Southern colonial façade before fading to black once again. Apart from Selznick's two Technicolor extravaganzas; *Gone With The Wind* and *Duel in the Sun* – Selznick's vane attempt to translate the former glory into a sprawling super-western – the studio logo never appears in anything but B&W.



In the mid-50s, the Selznick Studios were bought outright by comedian Lucille Ball and then husband, Desi Arnez and rechristened Desilu – a production facility exclusively operated for the production of Ball's trendsetting television comedy series 'I Love Lucy', after which the facilities were liquidated in yet another sell off.



Though RKO's backlot and virtually all of its front offices would be leveled to make room for other less memorable construction, the Southern colonial façade of Selznick International has survived and remains a popular tourist attraction on the Hollywood studio tour to this day. Perhaps because it so infrequently graced but a handful of movies that Selznick personally oversaw in his heyday, the Selznick Studios/International trademark is not as readily identified or enduring within the public's collective consciousness today.

(Top: an RKO Distribution closing credit for Disney's *Peter Pan*. Left: a stitched together screen credit for Selznick's *Gone With The Wind* 1939. Note that by the time of the release of *Duel in the Sun*, four years later 'Selznick International' had once again become The Selznick Studio.

Also note that the shrubs in 1939 have been removed and a fresh bank of flowers added to the Southern colonial property housing the front offices of the studio. Bottom: a rare alternate view of the placard and southern colonial façade, looking rather baron and probably photographed in early December for the release of *The Prisoner of Zenda* 1936.)





(Left: two frames featuring the 'Selznick Release' placard. It seems that in Selznick's fastidious attention to every detail even 'wording' mattered. Below: a severely cropped and curiously reversed intro for The Portrait of Jennie. By 1946, Selznick had gambled and lost too much on his filmic ventures. 'Jennie' was a last ditch effort to resurrect the studio to profitability. The picture's abysmal performance at the box office sealed Selznick's fate as a film maker. Yet, viewed today, 'Jennie' is a triumph of haunting melodrama; the performance of Jennifer Jones as a spirit/muse to Joseph Cotten's frustrated portrait painter resonates an unsettling view of the afterlife and how the present and past are ever intermingling in the space/time continuum.)



The Walt Disney Company holds a curious position in the creation of its own corporate identity. In the early years, Disney relied exclusively on RKO for the wholesale marketing and distribution of its cartoon shorts and feature films. Perhaps it was Disney's own realization that in the realm of film making no other name in the business was as synonymous with children's entertainment as his that precluded Walt's investment in developing a corporate trademark for his film product during these formative years.

'Distributed by RKO' became a familiar precursor to all Disney classics up to and including Dumbo. However, with RKO's fate sealed in the mid-forties, Disney needed a new distribution company to market his product. He could have easily turned to United Artists, but instead decided that his studio had acquired enough clout to found its own distribution apparatus – Buena Vista Distribution Co. Inc. (above left). For the next 40 years the Buena Vista logo, in various incarnations, preceded all Disney movies – usually followed by an opening credit that read "Walt Disney presents".

However, in 1982, newly appointed President and CEO Michael Eisner decided that a new corporate identity should be developed for the Disney organization, one bearing the founder's name. Hence, for the premiere of The Little Mermaid in 1989, the new Walt Disney Pictures logo (center) debuted for the first time – a graphic stylization of the Disney theme park's Cinderella castle in Florida with a likeness of Walt's own signature imprinted below. While the Buena Vista trademark contained little fanfare, except on occasion a few bars of indistinguishable music, the new Disney Pictures logo borrowed a few memorable bars from its own Oscar-winning 'When You Wish Upon A Star' – reproduced in a synthesizer.

In 2007, this logo was replaced with a computer generated likeness of the actual castle in Florida's park. The camera swoops over a pastoral countryside with a train passing by, the reflection of fireworks caught in the still waters of a lagoon as the camera sails over the highest castle turret and finally pulling back to reveal the full front of the property – surrounded by water



and Walt's familiar signature materializing against the shimmering waters (right). This new logo contains a full refrain from 'When You Wish Upon A Star' with a full symphonic orchestration instead.

United Artists – primarily a distribution company co-founded by Douglas Fairbanks Sr., Mary Pickford and Charles Chaplin in the early silent days – did not directly 'make' movies as its competitors. Though Fairbanks and Chaplin both had their own independent production facilities under its trademarked banner, UA remained a wholesale marketer of independently produced movies. In the 30s and 40s, UA helped to import British films made at Pinewood Studios by The Rank Organization The Archers and London Films. In the 1950s, a lucrative alliance with American film producers, Hecht-Lancaster and The Mirisch Brothers yielded some lucrative box office successes (Marty, Separate Tables, The Apartment) that helped to sustain the company.



However, in 1962 UA – after being bought by Transamerica - made its most fortuitous pact with EON Productions whose sole asset – the James Bond books - proved to be one of the most lucrative and successful film franchises in movie history. UA's alliance with Bond continued until the release of 2007's Casino Royale – jointly produced by UA, EON and Sony Pictures. Though Sony retains the rights to this latest installment in the Bond series, the rest of the franchise currently belongs to MGM which currently is owned by 20th Century-Fox.

The professional relationship between MGM and UA dates all the way back to the Thalberg era at Metro in the early 30s. However in 1980, MGM acquired UA on a wholesale purchase after Ted Turner bought MGM's studio facilities from Kirk Kerkorian. Due in part to its crippling overhead, Turner was forced to sell off portions of that purchase – including the studio facilities and the name back to Kerkorian.

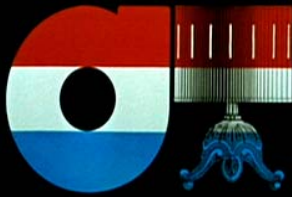
Over the next few years, the trademark UA symbol infrequently appeared on limited releases. In 1992 a completely redesigned logo featuring the full name 'United Artists' debuted on theater screens – with a footer marking the distribution apparatus as 'An MGM Company' then later removing that credit all together. In 2007, the UA logo reverted to the UA symbol first trademarked by the company in 1962 and reinstating 'An MGM Company' less prominently as footer near the bottom, along with the company's website address.

Today, with an absence of power once acquired and maintained by the studio system, the proliferation of independent production companies and producers has generated a myriad of company trademarks and logos within our movie-going experience. While some – like Hollywood Pictures and Touchstone have found permanent homes at Disney or Sony, others like Cinergi and Castlerock have been ripe for the trading – gradually distilled from actively producing signifiers of a fledgling corporate entity to merely invisible hallmarks of their brief past easily tacked on to newer film product. Where does the future of the Hollywood trademark lay?

Perhaps most readily in its past with perennial resurrections of the lady and her torch, the Warner shield, the swirling Universal globe and that majestic earth shattering roar of a lion – iconography that once seen is symbolic of a much richer and more vibrant film-making heritage. There's magic in those names and an unfathomable wealth of memories in their trademarks.



AN
american zoetrope



PRODUCTION

(The gradual distillation of art into commerce has resulted in a myriad of production companies, most capable of producing only one or two feature films before vanishing from the cinematic landscape. Below and surrounding are a few of the more memorable attempts at creating a corporate identity in an industry that currently is unable to sustain one.)



DREAMWORKS
SKG

AN AVCO EMBASSY FILM

CASTLE ROCK
ENTERTAINMENT

HOLLYWOOD PICTURES

An
ORION®
PICTURES RELEASE

A GEFKEN COMPANY RELEASE

IMAGE MOVERS

20TH ANNIVERSARY
MIRAMAX
FILMS

LIONSGATE

FROM
NEW LINE CINEMA

SPYGLASS



RYSHER®
ENTERTAINMENT
A COX COMPANY