**Movie Timeline**

***Here are key moments in the history and evolution of the cinema.***

**1889**

William Kennedy Laurie Dickson, commissioned by [Thomas Alva Edison](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0816770), builds the first motion-picture camera and names it the Kinetograph.

**1894**

The Edison Corporation establishes the first motion-picture studio, a Kinetograph production center nicknamed the Black Maria (slang for a police van).

The first Kinetoscope parlor opens at 1155 Broadway in [New York City](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0108570). Spectators can watch films for 25 cents.

**1895**

In France, [Auguste and Louis Lumière](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0830608) hold the first private screening. The brothers invent the Cinématograph, a combination camera and projector. The image of an oncoming train is said to have caused a stampede.

**1903**

Edison Corporation mechanic Edwin S. Porter turns cameraman, director and producer to make *The Great* *Train Robbery*. With 14 shots cutting between simultaneous events, this 12-minute short establishes the shot as film's basic element and editing as a central narrative device. It is also the first Western.

**1905**

The first movie theater opens in [Pittsburgh](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0839226).

**1909**

*The New York Times* publishes the first movie review, a report on [D. W. Griffith's](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0821857)*Pippa Passes*.

**1910**

[Thomas Edison](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0816770) introduces his kinetophone, which makes talkies a reality.

**1911**

The first feature film is released when the two reels of [D. W. Griffith's](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0821857) [*Enoch Arden*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0426079)are screened together.

**1912**

*Photoplay* debuts as the first magazine for movie fans.

**1914**

In his second big-screen appearance, [Charlie Chaplin](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0811382) plays the Little Tramp, his most famous character.

Winsor McCay unleashes *Gertie the Dinosaur*, the first animated cartoon.

**1915**

[D. W. Griffith's](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0821857) technically brilliant Civil War epic, *The Birth of a Nation*, introduces the narrative close-up, the flashback and other elements that endure today as the structural principles of narrative filmmaking.

**1916**

[Charlie Chaplin](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0811382) signs on with Mutual Studios and earns an unprecedented $10,000 a week.

**1919**

[Charlie Chaplin](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0811382), [D. W. Griffith](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0821857), [Douglas Fairbanks](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0818138), and [Mary Pickford](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0838956) establish United Artists in an attempt to control their own work.

**1921**

*The Sheik*, directed by George Melford, debuts and establishes star [Rudolph Valentino](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0850357) as cinema's best-known lover.

**1923**

German Shepherd Rin Tin Tin becomes film's first canine star.

**1924**

[Walt Disney](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0815633) creates his first cartoon, "Alice's Wonderland."

**1925**

[Sergei Eisenstein](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0816907) makes *Potemkin*, a revolutionary portrait of mutiny aboard a battleship. In the hands of Eisenstein, montage is raised to the highest structural role in filmmaking, serving as the unifying element of the medium.

*Ben-Hur*, costing a record-setting $3.95 million to produce, is released.

**1927**

Popular vaudevillian [Al Jolson](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0826542) astounds audiences with his nightclub act in *The Jazz Singer*, the first feature-length talkie.

**1928**

[Walt Disney](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0815633) introduces Galloping Gaucho and Steamboat Willie, the first cartoons with sound.

The [Academy Awards](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0147913) are handed out for the first time. *Wings* wins Best Picture.

**1930**

As head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, [William Hays](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0823065) establishes a code of decency that outlines what is acceptable in films.

**1931**

Double features emerge as a way for the unemployed to occupy time.

**1934**

[*It Happened One Night*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0152167) sweeps the [Academy Awards](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0147913), winning Best Picture, Director, Actor, and Actress.

**1935**

Although a primitive, two-color process was first used in 1922, audiences weren't impressed by Technicolor until a three-color system appeared in *Becky Sharp*.

**1937**

Walt Disney's first full-length animated feature, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, hits theaters and becomes an instant classic.

**1939**

The big-screen adaptation of [*Gone with the Wind*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0152158) premieres, and will go on to gross $192 million, making it one of the most profitable films of all time. It's also one of the longest films, clocking in at 231 minutes.

Spencer Tracy wins his second consecutive Best Actor Oscar. He won the 1937 Oscar for his role in *Captains Courageous*and the 1938 award for *Boys Town.*

**1941**

In [*Citizen Kane*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0152138), [Orson Welles](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0851810) subordinates all previous technological and cinematic accomplishments to his own essentially cinematic vision. Using newly developed film stocks and a wider, faster lens, Welles pushes the boundaries of montage and [mise-en-scène, as well as sound](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0859787), redefining the medium.

Actress [Greta Garbo](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0820174) retires at age 36.

**1942**

[*Casablanca*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0152134) premieres in theaters.

**1946**

The [Cannes Film Festival](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0149970) debuts in France.

[*The Best Years of Our Lives*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0152122) debuts, and is immediately recognized as a classic post-War film that accurately—and poignantly—portrays the readjustment families face when loved ones return from battle. The film won Oscars for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Supporting Actor.

[Roberto Rossellini's](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0842465) Neorealist ode to the Italian Resistance, *Rome, Open* *City*, presents an alternative to [Hollywood](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0823987) with its use of street cinematography, grainy black-and-white stocks and untrained actors, lyrically capturing the despair and confusion of post-World War II Europe.

**1948**

The Hollywood Ten, a group of writers, producers and directors called as witnesses in the [House Committee's Investigation of Un-American Activities](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0824313), are jailed for contempt of Congress when they refuse to disclose if they were or were not Communists.

**1953**

To counteract the threat of television, Hollywood thinks big and develops wide-screen processes such as CinemaScope, first seen in *The Robe*.

**1955**

*On the Waterfront* nearly sweeps the 1954 Academy Awards, winning Best Picture, Best Actor [(Marlon Brando)](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0808741), Best Supporting Actress [(Eva Maria Saint)](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0763140), and Best Director [(Elia Kazan)](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/SPOT-KAZAN1).

70mm film is introduced with *Oklahoma!*

[James Dean](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0814872) dies in a car accident at age 26.

**1959**

[Jean-Luc Godard's](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0821097) [*Breathless*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0152127), typical of the French New Wave use of the jump cut, the hand-held camera and loose, improvised direction, is made for $90,000 in just four weeks. The jump cut's assault on seamless editing and the presumption of time continuity opens new possibilities for filmmakers.

**1960**

[Alfred Hitchcock's](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0823822) *Psycho* terrifies audiences and becomes one of the year's most successful films, as well as one of the most memorable psychological thrillers.

**1961**

*West Side Story* is adapted for the big screen, and will go on to win Oscars for Best Picture, Supporting Actor (George Chakiris), Supporting Actress [(Rita Moreno)](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0759658), and Directing (Robert Wise and [Jerome Robbins](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0842056)).

[Audrey Hepburn](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0154778) delights as Holly Golightly in [*Breakfast at Tiffany's*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0152124), but [Henry Mancini](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0760968) emerges as the real star. He won two Oscars and four [Grammy Awards](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0150533) for the score, which included the hit "Moon River."

**1962**

[Marilyn Monroe](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0833770) dies of a drug overdose at age 36.

Government regulations force studios out of the talent agency business.

**1964**

*Red Desert* makes spectacular use of the recently perfected zoom lens, which increases the optical mobility of a shot and its expressive capacities.

**1965**

[*The Sound of Music*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0152237) premieres. An instant hit, the film was one of the top-grossing films of 1965 and remains one of film's most popular musicals.

**1968**

The motion picture rating system debuts with G, PG, R and X.

**1969**

*Midnight Cowboy* wins the Best Picture Oscar, the first and only time an X-rated movie received the honor.

**1970**

[George C. Scott](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0844109) gives one of film's most memorable performances in [*Patton.*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0837888) He won the Best Actor Oscar for his turn as the title character, but refused the gold statuette.

**1973**

At the [1972 Academy Awards](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0149237), Sacheen Littlefeather stands in for [Marlon Brando](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0154676) and refuses his Best Actor Oscar for his role in [*The Godfather*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0152156), to protest the U.S. government's treatment of Native Americans.

**1974**

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* sweeps the top Oscars, winning Best Picture, Director, Actor, and Actress.

**1976**

The Steadicam is used for the first time in [*Rocky*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0152220).

**1977**

[*Star Wars*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0195640) hits theaters—for the first time—and will go on to be the second highest-grossing film of all time.

[*Saturday Night Fever*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0152224) sparks the disco inferno and the popularity of movie soundtracks.

**1990**

The X rating is replaced by NC-17 (no children under 17).

**1993**

*Lost in Yonkers* is edited on an Avid Media Composer system, the first non-linear editing system to allow viewing at film's required “real-time”-viewing rate of 24 frames per second. By converting film into digital bits, film can now be cut on a computer.

**1994**

[Steven Spielberg](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0846277) wins his first directing Oscar for [*Schindler's List*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0152226).

**1995**

[Tom Hanks](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0154769) wins his second consecutive Best Actor Oscar. He won in 1994 for his role in *Philadelphia* and in 1995 for *Forrest Gump*.

**1997**

[*Titanic*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/SPOT-TITANIC) crashes into theaters. It is the most expensive film of all time, costing between $250 and $300 million to produce and market.

**1998**

*Titanic* becomes the highest-grossing film of all time, raking in more than $580 million domestically.

[*Titanic*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0300457) captures a record-tying 11 Academy Awards, including those for Best Picture and Best Director [(James Cameron)](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0746241).

The [American Film Institute](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0803673) announces its [list of the top 100 films of all time](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/SPOT-AFITOP100).[*Citizen Kane*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0152138) tops the list.

**1999**

[*Star Wars Episode I—The Phantom Menace*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0778046) opens and breaks a string of box office records. The film grosses $102.7 million in its debut five-day weekend.

[*The Blair Witch Project*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/SPOT-BLAIRWITCH) hits theaters and becomes an instant cult classic. It grosses more than $125 million at the box office and cost only $30,000 to make.

**2000**

Warner Bros. announces that 11-year-old British actor Daniel Radcliffe will play the titular wizard in [*Harry Potter and the Sorceror's Stone,*](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/SPOT-HARRYPAGE1) the first film to be adapted from the wildly popular series of young adult books by [J. K. Rowling](http://www.infoplease.com/spot/harrycreator1.html). The film is due out Thanksgiving 2001.

**2001**

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences creates as new category for the [Oscars](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0147913): Best Animated Feature. *Shrek* wins the trophy.

A potential strike by the Writers Guild of America threatens to cripple Hollywood as the WGA and Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers grapple over several sticking points in their contract, including payments to writers when films and TV shows go to video or are broadcast as reruns.

The first installments of both the *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings* movies premiere. Both go on to gross more than $300 million at the box office.

**2002**

*My Big Fat Greek Wedding becomes the most profitable movie of all time. It earns more than $200 million at the box office, while costing only about $5 million to make.*

**2003**

*Finding Nemo* replaces *The Lion King* as the [highest-grossing animated film](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0883357) of all time. *Finding Nemo* doesn't hold the honor for long. *Shrek 2* shoots to the top of the list in 2004.

**2005**

With the release of *Stars Wars Episode III: The Revenge of the Sith,* [George Lucas](http://www.infoplease.com/cgi-bin/id/A0192895) completes his [six-film series](http://www.infoplease.com/spot/starwars.html).

**2006**

The Walt Disney Co. pays $7.4 billion for Pixar Animation Studios, the powerhouse that created the Toy Story films, *Monsters, Inc.,* *Finding Nemo,* and *The Incredibles.*