Motion Pictures:
The Great Entertainer

From the book:

"Understanding Media in the Digital Age"

"Legacy" Medium Continues to Thrive

❑ Far from being left behind as "old school" media, movies are using the fruits of the digital age to their advantage

❑ Movie producers are not only using the three-screen universe (TV, cable, on-demand Internet streaming video, computers and smart phones) to expand beyond the "big screen" of movie houses for distribution, they are producing movies especially for them

❑ The challenge of television forced the motion picture medium to change in many ways- it did and remains a vital industry today

❑ Malaise or criticisms today can be in terms of many films' predictability, formulas and "Hollywood endings"

❑ For example, how many new twists can there be in the romantic comedy genre?
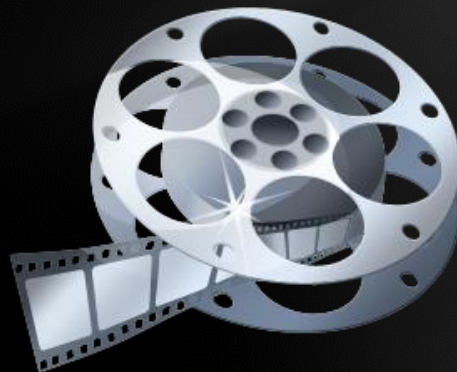
Movies Have Made Their Mark

- ❑ Perhaps more than any other medium, the motion picture industry has attracted the popular imagination

- ❑ The audience potential for a single film is vast - in the tens-to-hundreds of millions

- ❑ From the earliest films, movie stars have had outsized reputations and an iconic place in our culture, with fans fascinated by the smallest details of their lives

- ❑ Movies continue to be the great entertainer, more concerned with pure entertainment than any other media

- ❑ Movies have left indelible stamps on our nation and our culture

- ❑ Our standards of female beauty and sexual attractiveness have for generations been derived in some part from movies, from Greta Garbo, Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor to Angelina Jolie, Eva Mendes and Charlize Theron

- ❑ The same is true with our concepts of handsome manliness that have been influenced by actors from Gary Cooper, Clark Cable and John Wayne to Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise and Will Smith

Distinct Movie Characteristics

- ❑ In addition to being a medium of communication and a form of popular culture, motion pictures are also a social force, a huge and diversified industry, and an intricate art form

- ❑ "Going to the movies" remains a unique social experience- getting people out of their homes to enjoy the dynamic big screen experience that is the essence of what movies offer audiences

- ❑ Films have long been a social force, raising awareness about issues and also influencing morals, manners, beliefs and behavior

- ❑ As art, film takes in the whole spectrum of forms that the term art implies: it's a performing art, like the theater and dance; film cinematography can be comparable to paintings; and like music, it is a recording art (movie soundtracks can be best-sellers and art forms in themselves)

The Function of Films

Entertain- or amuse, by providing diversion and enjoyment

Educate- as many documentaries do

Persuade- or influence, as in the case of wartime propaganda films

Enrich- film as art, striving to enrich our cultural experiences

Movie Origins

❑ "Magic lantern shows" were the first form of movie projection

❑ In 1645, a German priest, Athanasius Kirscher, who had experimented with projecting a visual image by passing light through a transparency, put on a show using slides of religious figures he had painted himself

❑ It was a sensation even though the images on the wall looked like ghosts and could barely be seen- some thought he was in league with the devil and was conjuring up spirits using such "black arts"

❑ By the mid-1800s improved lanterns with reflecting mirrors and condensing lenses provided fairly reliable sources of light; people might be a nickel for slide shows

❑ By the 1870s, oil-burning lanterns had been replaced by a powerful light produced by burning hydrogen gas and oxygen through a cylinder of hard lime

❑ This form of illumination was widely used in the theater to spotlight acts and events (and gave us the expression "in the limelight")

❑ Electric lights eventually provided the needed illumination

❑ Thomas Edison and associates are credited with developing the first practical motion picture camera and first widely used one called the Vitascope (1890s)

❑ Edison also invented a peep-show device, the Kinetescope, that viewers would pay a nickel to see a brief film on a small screen (one at a time-not a big financial success)

❑ Idea developed to show movies to large numbers of people at once (became theaters)

Becoming a Mass Medium- Movie Timeline

- By 1900 all the scientific and technological underpinnings of the motion picture were in place, and the new device was ready for mass use. Millions of people were eager to pay to be entertained. It was now a matter of developing a way to present content that people wanted to see and to identify ways to maximize profits to be obtained from the movies

- 1900s- experimentation in length and content; "one and two reelers"

- 1910s- "Nickelodeons" and local motion picture theaters as small business ventures

- 1920s- the "talkies" take over; subject matter becomes risque, offensive to some

- 1930s- the "Golden Age" of film; more family appeal; families main entertainment

- 1940s- movies very popular during WWII; 90 million tickets sold weekly by 1946; "block booking" ends; many studios give up the theaters they owned

- 1950s- TV comes on scene; by 1960 movie ticket sales were one-fourth 1948's figure

- 1960s- moviemakers try to lure back audience with enhanced color, more violence, sex, horror, spectacular special effects, space fantasies

- 1970s- blockbusters bring back audiences: Star Wars, Jaws, others

- 1980s- VCRs first worry than are embraced by motion picture studios

- 1990s- music/movie piracy issues; adapting to the Internet explosion

- 2000s- motion pictures in the smart phone and mobile device era

Issues and Trends Today

- Ticket and concession prices continue to rise
    - $10+ tickets are common today (1933- 23 cents)
    - While we spend more in theaters, we are spending much less of the "family entertainment dollar" at theaters- less than 5 percent today- 25 percent in 1943
    - Theaters today earn up to 85 percent of their revenue from concession sales
- Fewer theaters today, but more screens
    - 1940s- 20,000 theaters in America
    - 2007- 6,356 theaters- but most are multiplex, some 18 screens or more
- Youthful patrons
    - 38 percent of ticket buyers are 12-24; 29 percent are 25-39; 24 percent are 40-59
- Digital theaters- studios are forcing theaters to convert from 35 mm projectors to costly digital projectors
    - Digital cinema overview video

Careers in the Film Industry

"Above the Line" Positions

- Producers
- Directors
- Actors
- Writers

- ❑ Upstate S.C. (Simpsonville) native Orlando Jones is a veteran Hollywood actor and comedian
- ❑ CofC alumnus Hunter Via's career as a movie and TV series editor
- ❑ S.C. has a new Apple app for the state's film industry

"Below the Line" Positions

- Casting Directors
- Production Assistants
- Assistant Directors
- Camera Operators
- Gaffers and Best Boys
- Wardrobe Coordinators
- Stunt Coordinators
- Film Editors
- Post-production Staff
- Composers and Musicians
- Technical Advisors (and others)

THE END