Walter Elias Disney (/dɪzniː/;[1] December 5, 1901 – December 15, 1966) was an American entrepreneur, animator, voice actor and film producer. A pioneer of the American animation industry, he introduced several developments in the production of cartoons. As a film producer, Disney holds the record for most Academy Awards earned by an individual, having won 22 Oscars from 59 nominations. He was presented with two Golden Globe Special Achievement Awards and an Emmy Award, among other honors. Several of his films are included in the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress. Born in Chicago in 1901, Disney developed an early interest in drawing. He took art classes as a boy and got a job as a commercial illustrator at the age of 18. He moved to California in the early 1920s and set up the Disney Brothers Studio with his brother Roy. With Ub Iwerks, Walt developed the character Mickey Mouse in 1928, his first highly popular success; he also provided the voice for his creation in the early years. As the studio grew, Disney became more adventurous, introducing synchronized sound, full-color three-strip Technicolor, feature-length cartoons and technical developments in animation. The results, seen in features such as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937), Fantasia, Pinocchio (both 1940), Dumbo (1941) and Bambi (1942), furthered the development of animated film. New animated and live-action films followed after World War II, including the critically successful Cinderella (1950) and Mary Poppins (1964), the latter of which received five Academy Awards. In the 1950s, Disney expanded into the amusement park industry, and in 1955 he opened Disneyland. To fund the project he diversified into television programs, such as Walt Disney's Disneyland and The Mickey Mouse Club; he was also involved in planning the 1959 Moscow Fair, the 1960 Winter Olympics, and the 1964 New York World's Fair. In 1965, he began development of another theme park, Disney World, the heart of which was to be a new type of city, the "Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow" (EPCOT). Disney was a heavy smoker throughout his life, and died of lung cancer in December 1966 before either the park or the EPCOT project were completed. Disney was a shy, self-deprecating and insecure man in private but adopted a warm and outgoing public persona. He had high standards and high expectations of those with whom he worked. Although there have been accusations that he was racist or anti-Semitic, they have been contradicted by many who knew him. His reputation changed in the years after his death, from a purveyor of homely patriotic values to a representative of American imperialism. He nevertheless remains an important figure in the history of animation and in the cultural history of the United States, where he is considered a national cultural icon. His film work continues to be shown and adapted; his studio maintains high standards in its production of popular entertainment, and the Disney amusement parks have grown in size and number to attract visitors in several countries.

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Biography Early life: 1901–1920 Walt Disney was born on December 5, 1901, at 1249 Tripp Avenue, in Chicago's Hermosa neighborhood.[a] He was the fourth son of Elias Disney—born in the Province of Canada, to Irish parents—and Flora (née Call), an American of German and English descent.[3][4][b] Aside from Disney, Elias and Call's sons were Herbert, Raymond and Roy; the couple had a fifth child, Ruth, in December 1903.[7] In 1906, when Disney was four, the family moved to a farm in Marceline, Missouri, where his uncle Robert had just purchased land. In Marceline, Disney developed his interest in drawing when he was paid to draw the horse of a retired neighborhood doctor.[8] Elias was a subscriber to the Appeal to Reason newspaper, and Disney practiced drawing by copying the front-page cartoons of Ryan Walker.[9] Disney also began to develop an ability to work with watercolors and crayons.[4] He lived near the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway line and became enamored with trains.[10] He and his younger sister Ruth started school at the same time at the Park School in Marceline in late 1909.[11] In 1911, the Disneys moved to Kansas City, Missouri.[12] There, Disney attended the Benton Grammar School, where he met fellow-student Walter Pfeiffer, who came from a family of theatre fans and introduced Disney to the world of vaudeville and motion pictures. Before long, he was spending more time at the Pfeiffers' house than at home.[13] Elias had purchased a newspaper delivery route for The Kansas City Star and Kansas City Times. Disney and his brother Roy woke up at 4:30 every morning to deliver the Times before school and repeated the round for the evening Star after school. The schedule was exhausting, and Disney often received poor grades after falling asleep in class, but he continued his paper route for more than six years.[14] He attended Saturday courses at the Kansas City Art Institute and also took correspondence courses in cartooning.[4][15] In 1917, Elias bought stock in a Chicago jelly producer, the O-Zell Company, and moved back to the city with his family.[16] Disney enrolled at McKinley High School and became the cartoonist of the school newspaper, drawing patriotic pictures about World War I.[17][18] He also took night courses at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts.[19] In mid-1918, Disney attempted to join the United States Army to fight against the Germans, but he was rejected for being too young. After forging the date of birth on his birth certificate, he joined the Red Cross in September 1918 as an ambulance driver. He was shipped to France but arrived in November, after the armistice.[20] He drew cartoons on the side of his ambulance for decoration and had some of his work published in the army newspaper Stars and Stripes [21] Disney returned to Kansas City in October 1919,[22] where he worked as an apprentice artist at the Pesmen-Rubin Commercial Art Studio. There, he drew commercial illustrations for advertising, theater programs and catalogs. He also befriended fellow artist Ub Iwerks.[23]

Early career: 1920–1928

Walt Disney's business envelope featured a self-portrait c. 1921

In January 1920, as Pesmen-Rubin's revenue declined after Christmas, Disney and Iwerks were laid off. They started their own business, the short-lived Iwerks-Disney Commercial Artists.[24] Failing to attract many customers, Disney and Iwerks agreed that Disney should leave temporarily to earn money at the Kansas City Film Ad Company, run by A. V. Cauger; the following month Iwerks, who was not able to run their business alone, also joined.[25] The company produced commercials using the cutout animation technique.[26] Disney became interested in animation, although he preferred drawn cartoons over cutouts. He started to work on a feature-length project, the short cartoons they produced were sold as "Newman's Laugh-O-Grams".[30] Disney studied Paul Terry's Aesop's Fables as a model, and the first six "Laugh-O-Grams" were modernized fairy tales.[31]

Play media

Newman Laugh-O-Gram (1921)

In May 1921, the success of the "Laugh-O-Grams" led to the establishment of Laugh-O-Gram Studio, for which he hired more animators, including Fred Harman's brother Hugh, Rudolf Ising and Iwerks.[32] The Laugh-O-Grams cartoons did not provide enough income to keep the company solvent, so Disney started production of Alice's Wonderland—based on Alice's Adventures in Wonderland—which combined live action with animation; he cast Virginia Davis in the title role.[33] The result, a 12-and-a-half-minute, one-reel film, was completed too late to save Laugh-O-Gram Studio, which went
into bankruptcy in 1923. [34] Disney moved to Hollywood in July 1923. Although New York was the center of the cartoon industry, he was attracted to Los Angeles because his brother Roy was convalescing from tuberculosis there. [35] Disney’s efforts to sell Alice’s Wonderland were in vain until he heard from New York film distributor Margaret J. Winkler. She was losing the rights to both the Out of the Inkwell and Felix the Cat cartoons, and needed a new series. In October they signed a contract for six Alice comedies, with an option for two further series of six episodes each. [36] Disney and his brother Roy formed the Walt Disney Studio—Walt Disney Company—to produce the films. [37] [38] They persuaded Davis and her family to relocate to Hollywood to continue production, with Davis on contract at $100 a month. In July 1924 Disney also hired Iwerks, persuading him to relocate from Kansas City to Los Angeles. [39] Early in 1925, Disney hired an ink artist, Lillian Bounds. They married in July of that year, at her brother’s house in her hometown of Lewiston, Idaho. [40] The marriage was generally happy, according to Lillian, although according to Disney’s biographer Carman Maxwell, Lillian was jealous, and Disney was always telling her that he was always looking for a better wife. [41] Lillian had little interest in films or the Hollywood social scene and she was, in the words of the historian Steven Watts, “content with household management and providing support for her husband.” [42] Their marriage produced two daughters, Diane (born December 1933) and Sharon (adopted in December 1936, born six weeks previously). [43] Within the family, neither Disney nor his wife hid the fact Sharon had been adopted, although they became annoyed if people outside the family raised the point. [44] The Disneys were careful to keep their daughters out of the public eye as much as possible, particularly in the light of the Lindbergh kidnapping; Disney took steps to ensure his daughters were not photographed by the press. [45] The first appearance of Mickey Mouse, in Steamboat Willie (1928) Mickey Mouse first appeared in May 1928 as a short test screening of the show Plane Crazy, and the second feature, The Goolpin Gaucho, failed to find a distributor. [57] Following the 1927 sensation The Jazz Singer, Disney used synchronized sound on the third short, Steamboat Willie, to create the first post-produced sound cartoon. After the animation was complete, Disney signed a contract with the former executive of Universal Pictures, Pat Powers, to use the "Powers Cinephone" recording system. [58] Cinephone became the new distributor for Disney’s early sound cartoons, which soon became popular. [59] To improve the quality of the music, Disney hired the professional composer and arranger Carl Stalling, on whose suggestion the Silly Symphonies series was developed. "Symphony Flight of 1928," the first in the series, was released in 1929, and was an immediate success both financially and artistically. [60] The original choice of name was Mortimer Mouse, but Lillian thought it too pompous, and suggested Mickey instead. [61] Mickey Mouse and Silly Symphonies series were successful, but Disney and his brother felt they were not receiving their rightful share of profits from Powers. In 1930, Disney tried to trim costs from the process by using Iwerks to abandon the practice of animating every separate cel in favor of the more efficient technique of drawing key poses and letting lower-paid assistants sketch the in-between drawings. Disney offered Powers and Davis reduced fees and signed Iwerks to work for him; Stalling resigned shortly afterwards, thinking that without Iwerks, the Disney Studio would close. [61] Disney had a nervous breakdown in October 1931—whom he blamed on the machinations of Powers and his own overwork—so he and Lillian took an extended holiday to Cuba and a cruise to Panama to recover. [62] Disney in 1935 With the loss of Powers as a distributor, Disney signed a contract with Columbia Pictures to distribute the Mickey Mouse cartoons, which became increasingly popular, including internationally. [63] [64] Disney always keen to embrace new technology, filmed Flowers and Trees (1932) in color through the Technicolor process. [65] Disney was given the right to use the three-strip process for A Summer’s Day, although the result was not so successful. [66] In 1934, several Silly Symphony cartoons were in color. Silly Symphony was an Academy Award (for the creation of Mickey Mouse); [67] In 1935, Disney produced The Three Little Pigs, a film described by the media historian Adrian Danks as "the most successful short animation of all time". [68] The film won Disney another Academy Award in the Short Subject (Cartoon) category. The film’s success led to a further increase in the studio’s staff, which numbered nearly 200 by the end of the year. [71] Disney utilized the importance of telling emotionally gripping stories that would interest the audience, and he invested in a "story department" separate from the animators, with storyboard artists who would detail the plots of Disney’s films. [73] Golden age of animation: 1934–1941 Walt Disney introduces each of the seven dwarfs in a scene from the original 1937 Snow White theatrical trailer. By 1934, Disney had become dissatisfied with producing formulaic cartoon shorts, and began a four-year production of a feature-length cartoon, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, based on the fairytale. When news leaked out about the project, many in the film industry predicted it would bankrupt the company; industry insiders nicknamed it “Disney’s Folly.” The film, which was the first animated feature made in full color and sound, cost $1.5 million to produce—three times over budget. To ensure the animation was as realistic as possible, Disney sent his animators on courses at the Chouinard Art Institute; they brought animals into the studio and hired actors so that the animators could study realistic movement. To portray the changing perspective of the background as a camera moved through a scene, Disney’s animators developed a multplane camera which allowed drawings on different levels to be shot simultaneously. The glass could be moved to create the impression of a camera passing through the scene. The first work created on the camera machine was called the Old Mill. Although the film was largely finished by the time the multplane camera had been completed. Disney ordered some scenes be re-drawn to use the new effects. Snow White was released in December 1937 to high praise from critics and audiences. The film became the most successful motion picture of 1938 and by May 1939 its total gross of $8.5 million made it the most successful sound film made to that date. [75] Snow White had been largely filmed by the time the multplane camera had been completed. Disney ordered several scenes be re-drawn to use the new effects. While a federal mediator from the National Labor Relations Board negotiated with the two sides, Disney accepted an offer from the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs to make a goodwill trip to South America, ensuring he was absent during a resolution he knew he would be unfavorable to the Disney Brothers Studio. [86] As a result of the state of the film, several animators left the studio, and Disney’s relationship with other members of staff was permanently strained as a result. [89] The strike temporarily interrupted the studio’s next production, Dumbo (1941), which Disney produced in a simple and inexpensive manner; the film received a positive reaction from audiences and critics alike. World War II and beyond: 1941–1950 Disney drawing Goofy for a group of young girls in Argentina, 1941 Shortly after the release of Dumbo in October 1941, the Walt Disney Studio entered World War II. Disney formed the Walt Disney Training Films Unit with the company to produce instruction films for the military such as Four Methods of Flux Rivaling and Aircraft Production Methods. [91] Disney also met with Henry Morgenthaler, Jr., the Secretary of the Treasury, and agreed to produce short Donald Duck cartoons to promote war bonds. [92] Disney also produced several propaganda productions, including shorts such as Der Fuehrer’s Face—which won an Academy Award—and the 1943 feature film Victory Through Air Power. [93] The military campaign generated only enough revenue to cover costs, and the feature film Bambi—which had been in production since 1937—underperformed on its release in April 1942, and lost $200,000 at the box office. [94] On top of the low earnings from Pocinocio...
Disney had been a heavy smoker since World War I. He did not use cigarettes with filters, and had smoked a pipe as a young man. In November 1966, he
and Fantasia, the company had debts of $4 million with the
Bank of America in 1944.[95] At a meeting with Bank of America executives to discuss the future of the company, the bank's chairman and founder, Amadeo Giannini, told his executives, "I've been watching the Disney's pictures quite closely because I knew we were lending them money far above the financial risk. ... They're good this year, they're good next year, and they're good the year after. ... You have to relax and give them time to market their product."[96] Disney's production of short films decreased in the late 1940s, coinciding with increasing competition in the animation market from Technicolor and the combined animation and live-action productions.[58] In 1948, Disney initiated a series of popular live-action films, titled True-Life Adventures, with Seal Island the first; the film won the Academy Award in the Best Short Subject-Two-Reel category.[97] Disney grew more politically conservative as he got older. A Democratic Party supporter until the 1940 presidential election, when he switched allegiance to the Republicans,[98] he became a general supporter of Robert A. Taft. In 1946 he was a founding member of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, an organization they stated they "believed in, and like, the American Way of Life ... we find ourselves in sharp revolt against a rising tide of Communism, Fascism and kindred beliefs, that seek by subversive means to undermine and change this way of life"[100] In 1947, during the Second Red Scare, Disney testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), where he branded Herbert Sorrell, David Hilberman and William Pomerance, former animators and labor union organizers, as communist agitators; Disney stated that the 1941 strike led by them was part of an organized communist effort to gain influence in Hollywood.[101][102]

Disney's films were re-installed in Disneyland, although
Disney was less involved than he had been with previous pictures because of his involvement in his first entirely live-action feature, Treasure Island (1950), which was shot in Britain, as was The Story of Robin Hood and His Merrie Men (1952).[106] Other all-live-action features followed, many of which had patriotic themes.[58] He continued to produce full-length animated features too, including Alice in Wonderland (1951) and Peter Pan (1953). From the early to mid-1950s, Disney began to devote less attention to the animation department, entrusting most of its operations to his key animators, the Nine Old Men, although he always continued to present at story meetings. Instead, he started concentrating on other ventures.[107]

Disney shows the plans of Disneyland to officials from Orange County in December 1954

For several years Disney had been considering building a theme park. When he visited Griffith Park in Los Angeles with his daughters, he wanted to be in a park where he could have fun.[103] He visited the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, Denmark and was heavily influenced by the cleanliness and layout of the park.[109] In March 1952 he received zoning permission to build a theme park in Burbank, near the
Disneyland studios.[110] This site proved too small, and a larger plot in Anaheim, 35 miles (56 km) south of the studio, was purchased. To distance the project from the studio—which might attract the criticism of shareholders—Disney formed WED Enterprises (now Walt Disney Imagineering) and used his own money to fund a group of designers and animators to work on the plans.[111][112] Those involved became known as "Imagineers."[113] After obtaining banking he invited other stockholders, American Broadcasting-Paramount Theatres—part of American Broadcasting Company (ABC)—and Western Printing and Lithographing Company.[58] In mid-1954, Disney sent his Imagineers to every amusement park in the U.S. to analyze what worked and what pitfalls or problems were in the various locations and incorporated their findings into his design.[114] Construction work started in July 1954, and
Disneyland opened in July 1955; the opening ceremony was broadcast on ABC, which reached 70 million viewers.[115] The park was designed as a series of themed lands, linked by the central Main Street, U.S.A.—a replica of the main street in his hometown of Marceline. The connected thematic areas were Adventureland and Tomorrowland. The park also contained the narrow gauge Disneyland Railroad that linked the lands; around the outside of the park was a high berm to separate the park from the outside world.[116][117] An editorial in The New York Times considered that Disney had "tastefully combined some of the pleasant things of yesterday with dreams and fantasy of tomorrow."[118] Although there were early minor problems with the park, it was a success, and after a month's operation, Disneyland was receiving over 20,000 visitors a day; by the end of its first year, it attracted 3.6 million guests.[119] The money from ABC was contingent on Disney television programs.[120] The studio had been involved in a successful television series, 1950 about the making of Alice in Wonderland. Roy believed the program added millions to the box office takings. In a March 1951 letter to shareholders, he wrote that "television can be a most powerful selling aid for us, as well as a source of revenue. It will probably be on the premise that we enter television when we do."[58] In 1954, after the Disneyland funding had been agreed, ABC broadcast Walt Disney's Disneyland, an anthology television series consisting of animated cartoons, live-action features and other material from the studio's library. The show was successful in terms of ratings and profits, earning an audience share of over 50%.[121] In April 1955, Newsweek called the series an "American version of the French revue"[122] ABC was also active in the ratings, leading to Disneyland's first television program, The Mickey Mouse Club, a variety show catering specifically to children.[123] The program was accompanied by merchandising through various companies (Western Printing, for example, had been producing coloring books and comics for over 20 years, and produced several items connected to the show).[124] One of the segments of Disneyland consisted of the five-part miniseries Davy Crockett which, according to Gabler, "became an overnight sensation"[125] The show's theme song, "The Ballad of Davy Crockett," became a national sensation and ten million records were sold.[126] As a result, Disney formed his own record production and distribution entity, Disneyland Records.[127] As well as the construction of Disneyland, Disney worked on other projects away from the
studio. He was consultant to the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow; Disney Studios' contribution was America the Beautiful, a 19-minute film in the 360-degree Circarama theater that was one of the most popular attractions.[58] The following year he acted as the chairman of the Pageant Committee for the 1960 Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley, California, where he designed the opening, closing and medal ceremonies.[128]

Disney in 1954

Despite the demands wrought by non-studio projects, Disney continued to work on film and television projects. In 1955 he was involved in "Man in Space", a documentary film part of an organized communist effort to gain influence in Hollywood.[101][102] Disney in 1954—

During 1966, Disney庐cultivated businesses willing to sponsor EPCOT. He increased his involvement in the studio's films, and was heavily involved in the story development of The Jungle Book, the live-action musical feature The Happiest Millionaire (both 1967) and the animated short Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day.[142] Illness, death and aftermath

Grave of Walt Disney at Forest Lawn, Glendale

as an experimental prototype community of tomorrow that will take its cue from the new ideas and technologies that are now emerging from the creative centers of American industry. It will be a community of tomorrow that will never be completed, but will always be introducing and testing and demonstrating new materials and systems. And "PCOT will always be a showcase for the world for the ingenuity and imagination of American free enterprise."[140]
was diagnosed with lung cancer and was treated with cobalt therapy. On November 30 he felt unwell and was taken to St. Joseph Hospital where, on December 15, ten days after his 65th birthday, he died of complications caused by lung cancer. [143] Disney's remains were cremated two days later, and his ashes interred at the Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, California. [144] His estate included a 14 percent holding in the Disney companies. He changed the focus of the project from a town to an attraction.[152] At the inauguration in 1971, Roy dedicated Walt Disney World to his brother Roy's memory, and, in 1955, the Disney Studio's first feature film, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, was dedicated posthumously.[149] After Disney's death, his studios continued to produce live-action films prolifically but largely abandoned animation until the late 1980s, after which there was what The New York Times describes as the "Disney Renaissance" that began with The Little Mermaid (1989). [150] Disney's company continues to produce successful feature films, television and stage entertainment. [151]

**Roy Disney**, the founder of the Disney theme park, was posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. His estate included a 14 percent holding in the Disney companies. He changed the focus of the project from a town to an attraction.[152] At the inauguration in 1971, Roy dedicated Walt Disney World to his brother Roy's memory, and, in 1955, the Disney Studio's first feature film, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, was dedicated posthumously.[149] After Disney's death, his studios continued to produce live-action films prolifically but largely abandoned animation until the late 1980s, after which there was what The New York Times describes as the "Disney Renaissance" that began with The Little Mermaid (1989). [150] Disney's company continues to produce successful feature films, television and stage entertainment. [151]

Disney's plans for the futuristic city of EPCOT did not come to fruition. After his death, his brother Roy deferred his retirement to take full control of the Disney companies. He changed the focus of the project from a town to an attraction.[152] At the inauguration in 1971, Roy dedicated Walt Disney World to his brother Roy's memory, and, in 1955, the Disney Studio's first feature film, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, was dedicated posthumously.[149] After Disney's death, his studios continued to produce live-action films prolifically but largely abandoned animation until the late 1980s, after which there was what The New York Times describes as the "Disney Renaissance" that began with The Little Mermaid (1989). [150] Disney's company continues to produce successful feature films, television and stage entertainment. [151]

Display case in the lobby of the Walt Disney Family Museum showing many of the Academy Awards won by Disney

Disney received 59 Academy Award nominations, including 22 awards; both totals are records. [163] He was nominated for three Golden Globe Awards, but did not win, and he was also presented with two Special Achievement Awards—for Bambi (1942) and The Living Desert (1953)—and the Cecil B. DeMille Award. [164] He also received four Emmy Award nominations, winning once, for Best Performer for the Disneyland television series. [156] Several of his films are included in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant": Steamboat Willie (1928), Fantasia (1940), Pinocchio (1940), Bambi (1942) and The Living Desert (1953). In the Seven Dwarfs Mine Train at Walt Disney World, the Seven Dwarfs Mine Train replaced by a park more akin to a permanent world's fair. [155] In 2009, the Walt Disney Family Museum, designed by Disney's daughter Diane and her second husband E. D. Miller, opened in the Presidio of San Francisco. [156] Thousands of artifacts from Disney's life and career are on display, including numerous awards that he received. [157] In 2014, the Disney theme parks around the world hosted approximately 134 million visitors. [158] Disney has been portrayed numerous times in fictional works, and dozens of biographies have been written about him. [159] Several commentators have described Disney as a cultural icon. [160] He received the National Medal of Technology (1988), the National Medal of Arts (1990), the Order of the Bachelor of Arts, and the 1960 Nobel Peace Prize (received in absentia). [161] Other national awards include Thailand's Order of the Crown; Brazil's Order of the Southern Cross and Mexico's Order of the Aztec Eagle. [174] In the United States, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom on September 14, 1964; [176] and, in 1969, he was posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. [177] He received the Showman of the World Award from the National Association of Theatre Owners. [175] Disney was inducted into the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame in December 2006, [171] and was the inaugural recipient of a star on the Anaheim Walk of Stars in 1978. [178] The Walt Disney Family Museum in California was given its own star for motion pictures in 1978. [169] Disney was also inducted into the Television Hall of Fame in 1960, [176] and, in 1967, the Disney Studio's first feature film, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, was dedicated posthumously.[149] After Disney's death, his studios continued to produce live-action films prolifically but largely abandoned animation until the late 1980s, after which there was what The New York Times describes as the "Disney Renaissance" that began with The Little Mermaid (1989). [150] Disney's company continues to produce successful feature films, television and stage entertainment. [151]

Disney's public persona was very different from his actual personality. [180] Playwright Robert E. Sherwood described him as "almost painfully shy ... diffident" and self-deprecating. [181] According to his biographer Richard Schickel, Disney hid his shy and insecure personality behind his public identity. [182] Kimball argues that Disney "played the role of a bashful tycoon who was embarrassed in public" and knew that he was doing so. [183] Disney acknowledged the façade, and told a friend that "I'm not Walt Disney. I do a lot of things that Walt Disney would not do. Walt Disney does not smoke, I smoke. Walt Disney does not drink. I drink." [184] Critic Otis Ferguson, in The New Republic, called the private Disney "common and everyday, not in any sense a man of public life... but a good, everyday guy." Just Disney [188] Many of those who worked with Disney worked under the assumption that he gave his staff little encouragement due to his exceptionally high expectations. Norman recalls that when Disney said "That'll work", it was an indication of high praise. [185] Instead of direct approval, Disney gave high-performing staff financial bonuses, or recommended certain individuals to others, expecting that his praise would be passed on. [186] Views of Disney and his work have changed over the decades, and there have been polarized criticisms and opinions. [187] Some early cartoons. [188] Disney donated regularly to Jewish charities, he was named "1955 Man of the Year" by the American Jewish Congress, and, in 1955, the Disney Studio's first feature film, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, was dedicated posthumously.[149] After Disney's death, his studios continued to produce live-action films prolifically but largely abandoned animation until the late 1980s, after which there was what The New York Times describes as the "Disney Renaissance" that began with The Little Mermaid (1989). [150] Disney's company continues to produce successful feature films, television and stage entertainment. [151]

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The Walt Disney Company

Company timeline
Retlaw Enterprises

Criticism

Company officials

Founders

Walter Elias Disney
Roy Disney

Executives

Bob Iger (CEO) Alan N. Braverman (SEVP/GC) Christine McCarthy (CFO)

Board of directors

Susan E. Arnold (Independent Lead) Mary T. Barra Safra Catz John S. Chen Francis A. deSouza Bob Iger (Chairman) Maria Elena Lagomasino Fred H. Langhammer Aylwin B. Lewis Mark G. Parker

Walt Disney Studios

Walt Disney Animation Studios Walt Disney Pictures Distribution

Touchstone Pictures

Disney Music Group Disney Theatrical Group Disneynature Lucasfilm Marvel Studios Pixar

Media Networks

Disney–ABC TV Group

ABC Entertainment Group ABC TV Stations Disney Channels US

ESPN (80%) A&E Networks (50%)

Parks, Experiences and Consumer Products

Parks and Resorts

Adventures by Disney Disney Cruise Line Walt Disney Imagineering Disneyland Resort Disney Vacation Club Disneyland Paris Walt Disney World

Resort Hong Kong Disneyland Resort Shanghai Disney Resort

Consumer Products and Interactive Media

Licensing Disney Store Disney Publishing Worldwide

Disney English

Disney Online Games and Interactive Experiences

Disney Mobile

The Muppets Studio

Direct-to-Consumer and International

BAMTech (75%) Disney Digital Network Disney–ABC Domestic Television Disney Channels Worldwide Disney Media Distribution ESPN+ Hulu (30%)

Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment

Movies Anywhere

Streaming service

International

Argentina CIS France India

UTV Software Communications

Italy Latin America Germany

Super RTLJF RTL ILV

Other assets

Buena Vista Marvel Entertainment Reedy Creek Energy

See also: Acquisition of 21st Century Fox (pending)
Disney California Adventure

current attractions past attractions

Hotels

Disneyland Hotel Paradise Pier Hotel Grand Californian Hotel and Spa

Resort area

Downtown Disney

ESPN Zone World of Disney

Trader Sam's Enchanted Tiki Bar Napa Rose Disneyland Monorail System Anaheim Resort

Anaheim Resort Transportation

Team Disney Anaheim

People


Events

Happiest Homecoming on Earth Magic Music Days Weddings

Other

Incidents E ticket Fastpass PhotoPass Disneyland, Inc. Stanford Research Institute Partners Federal Credit Union Volunteers

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Walt Disney Imagineering

Walt Disney Creative Entertainment

Anaheim

Anaheim Rapid Connection

Walt Disney Parks and Resorts The Walt Disney Company

Awards for Walt Disney

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Television Hall of Fame Class of 1986

Steve Allen Fred Coe Walt Disney Jackie Gleason Mary Tyler Moore Frank Stanton Burr Tillstrom

v t e

Academy Honorary Award

1928–1950


1951–1975


1976–2000


2001–present

Walt Disney, American film and TV producer, a pioneer of animated cartoon films, and creator of the characters Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. He also planned and built the amusement park Disneyland and had begun a second one, Walt Disney World, before his death. Learn more about Disney in this article. 