

A Short History of Film

It's Friday night. You and your friends are looking for something to do. Someone suggests watching a movie. That sounds like a great idea! Now, what kind of movie do you want to see? A horror film? A comedy? Action? Suspense? Romantic comedy? Do you want to rent a movie? Go to someone's house to watch it? Or do you go out to the cinema to see the latest hit?

There are so many choices ...

People love watching movies. Even when the first movies came out in the 1860s, people were fascinated. Of course, back then movies were very different. The earliest ones were a series of photographs projected on a screen to show motion. For example, one of the first movies was an image of a horse running. The first picture showed a horse, the second one showed its legs moving, the third one showed the legs moving a bit more ... then the images moved faster and faster until it looked like the horse was moving on the screen. People thought this was magic!

In the 1880s, the motion-picture camera was invented: now people could film live action! The pictures of people and animals moving were captured onto celluloid film. If you open an old-fashioned camera (not a digital one) you can see the type of film that was used. These films were really simple. They were all black and white. They did not have sound and the pictures were not **edited**.

Because there was no sound, the films used words at the bottom of the screen to help them tell the story. For example, in a film about a man who **robs** trains, the man's words (such as "Give me your money!") were written on the screen so that people would understand.

Smart

Words

edit = to correct mistakes in a piece of film

rob = to steal money from someone

hire = to employ

soundtrack = music and sounds in a film

store = to keep things in a special place

To help create the mood, the movie theatres **hired** a pianist, or sometimes even an orchestra to play music during the film. The music that was played changed depending on the story. The music was exciting when there was a crime or dangerous moment; it was soft when there was romance!

In the 1920s, technology changed. Films started to have **soundtracks**. People called these films “talkies” because they could hear people talk in them!

All films were still in black and white until the 1940s and 1950s when more and more films were filmed in colour. One of the first movies to use both black-and-white and colour film was *The Wizard of Oz* (1939).

The latest change in film technology is the switch to digital recording. Now more and more films are being recorded as digital images rather than on celluloid film. Using digital film makes it easier to edit images and sound. It also produces a better quality of film and it is easier to **store** and reproduce.

So, the next time you decide to watch a movie, alone or with your friends, remember, you are not the first person to relax and enjoy a film! Film has a long history. You are doing what your grandparents and even your great-grandparents were doing when they were your age and looking for something to do!