ACTUALITY

An actuality film is one whose appeal is based around footage of real-life events or places. They could cover specific public events, for instance state occasions, sporting fixtures or ship launches, or they could simply record everyday life as it plays out on the street. Many of the most famous early films, such as Birt Acres' record of the 1895 Derby, or the Lumière Brothers' film of their workers leaving their factory, qualify as actualities, and they remained popular into the first decade of the 20th century, as demonstrated by much of Mitchell and Kenyon's output. A typical actuality film consists of a single shot, with a running time of a minute or less.

ANIMATOGRAPH

Also known as the Theatrograph, this invention by R.W. Paul was the first commercially produced 35mm film projector to be produced in Britain, and played a major role in the rapid development of the cinema from its first public demonstration in February 1896. Of all the various moving-image inventions of the nineteenth century, this is the most direct ancestor of the modern projector.

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BOER WAR

Both the Boer Wars (1880-1 and 1899-1902) were fought between the British Empire and the Boers, men of Dutch origin who had settled in the South African Republic (also known as the Transvaal Republic), and who are the ancestors of today's Afrikaners. The British were heavily defeated in the first Boer War, but eventually won the second, after which South Africa became part of the British Empire. The second Boer War was also the first military conflict to be filmed, although its largely guerrilla nature posed problems for cameraman trying to create visual interest.

BRITISH EMPIRE

The British Empire is the term used to described all the territories administered by Britain between the 16th and 20th centuries. Its origins date from early 1583, when Britain claimed the island of Newfoundland, but by Queen Victoria's death in 1901 the census recorded 400 million people as living under British rule, or roughly a quarter of the world's population at the time. Nearly half of this territory was annexed during the so-called "age of empire", 1815-1914, which, when added to the many industrial and communications innovations introduced during this period, made Britain the world's dominant global power. However, during the 20th century and especially in the twenty years after World War II, many former British colonies became independent, and in 1997, with the return of Hong Kong to China, the British Empire is generally considered to have ended (although Britain still retains a handful of places such as the Falkland Islands and Gibraltar).

COLOUR FILM

Although the overwhelming majority of films and still photographs made in the Victorian era were in black and white, experiments with colour photography began with a scientific paper by the physicist James Clerk Maxwell, which was published in 1855, and his theories were put into practice by Thomas Sutton in 1861, who took what is now accepted as the first colour photograph. Attempts at creating colour moving images date almost from the dawn of cinema, initially by applying colour to black-and-white images. R.W. Paul's catalogue advertised that Dancing Girls (1896) was "hand-coloured by Mr Doubell", while other early filmmakers offered similar attractions. Applying colour via stencils became increasingly popular at the turn of the 20th century, and by 1905 Pathé in France had introduced a mechanised stencil process. In 1899, Edward Raymond Turner patented an additive colour system that combined black and white film with red, green and blue filters, with three successive frames storing all the necessary colour information. Although Turner was never able to project it successfully, over a century later digital technology has demonstrated that his films did indeed record colour images. Pioneering Victorian filmmaker G.A. Smith devoted most of the final decade of his film career (which ended in 1914) to experimenting with the Kinemacolor system, which used a similar process.

THE DIAMOND JUBILEE

A royal jubilee celebration marks, respectively, a monarch's 25 years (a silver jubilee), 50 years (a golden jubilee), 60 years (a diamond jubilee) and 65 years (a sapphire jubilee) on the throne. George III marked the first royal golden jubilee (in 1810), Victoria the first diamond jubilee (in 1997), and Elizabeth II the first sapphire jubilee (in 2017). On 23 September 1896, Victoria became the longest-reigning British monarch to date (a record not broken until Elizabeth II passed that milestone on 9 September 2015), and it was decided to combine a celebration of both that and her sixty years on the throne with a lavish event to be held across the entire British Empire on 22 June 1897. Its centrepiece was a massive procession through London along a six-mile route from Buckingham Palace to St Paul's Cathedral via the Houses of Parliament, accompanied by extensive celebrations and street parties. Its significance in British film history is that it was the first such large-scale event to be extensively recorded by multiple cameras, and much of the footage survives to this day.

FACIALS

A very popular genre in the era of short single-shot films, the facial consisted of little more than footage of someone pulling faces. This was directly related to similar circus and music-hall acts, although with the advantage that the cinema could magnify the face in a way that was not possible in a live situation. Although many facials were deliberately grotesque, they could also simply consist of a shot of normal human behaviour - for instance, the Edison films Fred Ott's *Sneeze* (1894), one of the earliest examples. British facials include numerous examples by G.A. Smith, one of whose films (1900's *Grandma Threading Her Needle*) was marketed on the promise that "The facial contortions that are engaged in are ludicrous to say the least.") One of the more sophisticated examples is the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company's *Herbert Campbell as Little Bobby* (1899), which works both as a comedy facial and an advertisement for the Drury Lane pantomime in which Campbell was then co-starring.

DIORAMA

This precursor to the cinema involved an audience sitting in a darkened room facing a large image (typically a landscape) that would appear to come to life thanks to the clever use of lighting to create the effect of day turning into night, or the changing seasons. The first diorama was opened in Paris in 1822 by future photography pioneer Louis Daguerre, and another opened in Regent's Park in 1823. At the height of the diorama's popularity during the first half of the 19th century, there were five in London and several in other British cities, but as photography gained in popularity from the 1850s onwards, the diorama lost its appeal.

FACTORY GATE FILMS

One of the most famous early films was Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory (La sortie des usines Lumière, 1895), in which the Lumière Brothers filmed their workers leaving at the end of the day. This seems like unpromising material for an entire sub-genre, but film pioneers such as Mitchell and Kenyon made 'factory gate' films commercially appealing by filming people leaving factories and other workplaces all over the north of England, and then handing out leaflets inviting them to come and see themselves on film later that week. Today, social and cultural historians regard these films as an important record of how people dressed, walked and otherwise behaved – in the case of one Mitchell & Kenyon film from 1901, a factory worker at Parkgate ironworks in Rotherham flicks a two-finger V-sign at the camera (considered insulting in Britain), which is the earliest definite record of such a gesture. The way that they were marketed, if not shot, makes them the ancestors of today's "selfies".

FAIRGROUND SHOW

Although early cinema screenings initially took place in theatres and music halls in cities and larger towns, the new technology was rapidly taken up by travelling fairgrounds, who would construct temporary booths in which to screen films to curious provincial audiences. Lasting from 1897 until the early 1910s, these fairground shows significantly increased the total size of the film audience, and played a major role in the early success of the medium.

FILM CATALOGUE

As the film industry rapidly grew in the late 1890s, film companies issued catalogues of their products to exhibitors, including a detailed description of individual films. Since many films from the early days of cinema no longer survive, these catalogue entries are often the only record of their existence. However, historians have to treat these descriptions with caution: they were written by showmen who didn't hesitate to exaggerate if they felt that it would bring them more bookings.

FILM GAUGE

This refers to the width of the film, typically measured in millimetres. For much of the 20th century, the standard film gauge for professional film production was 35mm, although in the very early years of the cinema numerous different formats were used, not least because Thomas Edison had initially patented the 35mm film strip with four sprocket holes per frame. Examples include 17mm (the Birtac), 17.5mm (the Biokam), 54mm (the Bioskop), 60mm (the Demery) and 68mm (the Mutoscope and Biograph Company), the latter being exhibited at London's Palace Theatre of Varieties from 1897-1902. But despite the visual advantages of large-format film, 35mm had been established as the most common worldwide film gauge by the end of the Victorian era, since Edison's patent never applied outside the US, and was overturned entirely by a US court in 1902.

FILM LECTURE

The travelling lecture film combined projected film images with a live talk, and was an effective early method of demonstrating that the cinema could have serious educational potential even before the development of what we now recognise as film grammar. Decades before the introduction of sound cinema, films such as travelogues were accompanied by live narration, ideally by someone who had also visited the countries in question. A famous early film lecturer was Herbert Ponting (1870-1935), who accompanied Captain Scott's expedition to the South Pole (1910-13) and his feature-length documentary *The Great White Silence* (1924) started life as a visual accompaniment to a live lecture about his experiences there.

FILM PROGRAMME

Until the end of the Victorian era, virtually all films were very short, typically running only a few minutes maximum. As a result, they were typically shown in programmes of multiple films that would cover a wide variety of subjects, interspersing news and entertainment to maintain variety. The films themselves would also be an "act" in a programme that also included live performances of various kinds.

ILLUSIONIST

Many of the early film pioneers, including Georges Méliès, G.A. Smith and W.R. Booth, started out as stage performers specialising in the art of illusion, of performing seemingly impossible feats thanks to the clever application of tricks and devices of which the audience would hopefully be unaware. The invention of the cinema coincided with the so-called “golden age of magic”, in which stage magicians such as Harry Houdini, Nevil Maskelyne and David Devant became household names, and it is not surprising that several became attracted to the cinema at the earliest opportunity, thanks to its potential for creating effects that audiences had never seen before.

KINETOSCOPE

Created by Thomas Edison and W.K.L. Dickson between 1888 (when Edison filed the first relevant patent) and 1893 (when the first working model was unveiled), the Kinetoscope was the first commercially successful invention that depicted moving images in a form that we would recognise today. Indeed, they used 35mm film strips as the source of their images. However, the Kinetoscope was a “peep show” rather than a projection device, only catering for one viewer at a time after they’d put 25 cents in the slot, making it economically inefficient compared with showing one film to a much larger paying audience. However, at the time it was an enormous success, and copied by others in Europe (such as R.W. Paul) thanks to Edison leaving his patents unprotected outside the US.

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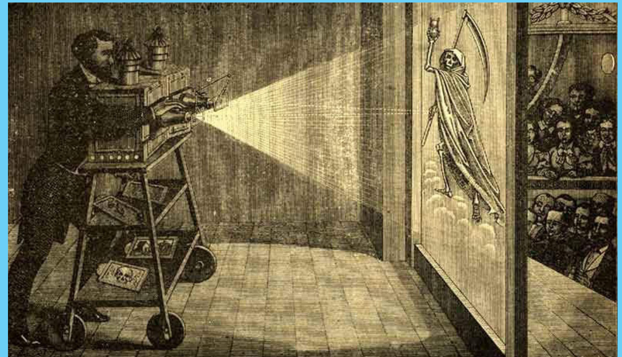
MAGIC LANTERN

The essence of cinema is the projection of images onto a screen, and magic lanterns were the earliest devices to do this. First introduced in the 17th century, they became very popular during the Victorian era, both as public entertainment and as toys for children. Magic lantern manufacturers would also produce slides, or strips of images that could be projected, sometimes with only very minor changes to each image so by moving the strip backwards and forwards a primitive moving-image effect could be created.

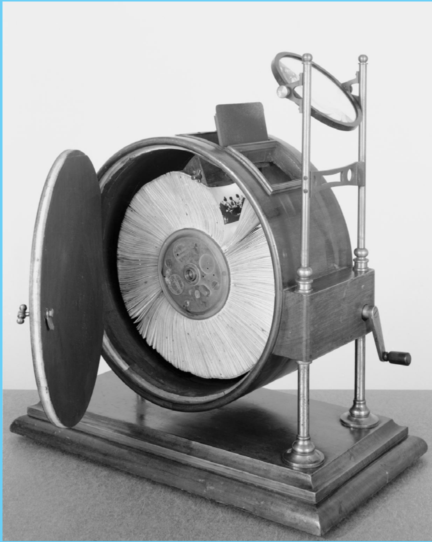


MUSIC HALL

The music hall was the dominant form of popular entertainment, especially for the working classes, between about 1850 and the start of World War I in 1914. (The US equivalent was known as vaudeville.) A typical music-hall performance would consist of a programme of stand-up comedy, speciality acts, songs and other eye-catching attractions, with leading performers such as Dan Leno and Marie Lloyd becoming huge celebrities. Early film performances were often aimed at music-hall audiences, and many music halls were later converted into cinemas once their popularity had overtaken that of the traditional music hall. Many of the great film comedians of the early 20th century, including Charles Chaplin, Buster Keaton and The Marx Brothers, started out in music hall or vaudeville.

MUTOSCOPE

Invented by W.K.L Dickson and Herman Casler in 1894, the mutoscope is a moving-picture device making use of hundreds of cards with slightly differing images on each. When the viewer inserted a coin and turned a handle, the cards would flick past so rapidly as to create a moving image. From the mid-1890s, and well into the 20th century, mutoscopes were a very popular attraction in amusement arcades. In Britain, they were known as "what the butler saw" machines, after a particularly popular version depicting a butler spying on a woman taking off her clothes.



PANORAMA

Patented by the Scottish portraitist Robert Barker in 1787, the panorama was a painted landscape on a circular canvas that completely surrounded the viewer, thus creating the illusion that they were standing in the middle of whatever scene was being depicted. Up to this point the panorama was the most completely immersive artistic experience yet devised. Panoramas gained in popularity during the Victorian era, where visitors could "visit" everything from real and imaginary landscapes to the sites of famous battles, and it is no coincidence that some early films were marketed with the promise of a "panorama" in the title, whether Paris, Pompeii, Venice or a London suburb like Ealing.

PEEP SHOWS

A peep show is a form of entertainment in which the viewer looks through a small hole into a box in which something is displayed – initially a print or a similarly still image, but from the 1890s onwards the Edison Kinetoscope was modelled on a traditional peep show (Thomas Edison even used the term), since it involved a single viewer watching moving images through a viewer after putting a coin in the slot. Today, the term "peep show" usually denotes something pornographic, but this was not the case in the Victorian era.

NEWS FILM

The news film is closely related to the actuality film, with the important distinction that it specifically captures events on film that were considered newsworthy, for instance Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (1897), or the Second Boer War (1899-1902). Indeed, some of the very earliest films of any kind, for instance Birt Acres' footage of the Boat Race and Derby of 1895, could now be considered early news films. At the turn of the 1910s, the concept of the newsreel was developed from the notion of editing together multiple news items, and this remained a fixture in cinemas until the advent of television half a century later.

PHANTOM RIDE

A film in which the camera is mounted to the front of a moving vehicle such as a train, and the journey is filmed from the driver's perspective. The first phantom rides were shown in 1897, and immediately caught the public imagination thanks to moving images that were more involving than anything attempted before, and their popularity only increased when filmmakers started taking their cameras to foreign locations, immersing their audiences in places that they would never have dreamed of actually visiting. Phantom rides lost popularity when film moved away from single-shot attractions, but they are the direct ancestors of the tracking shot and also of modern virtual reality experiences that seek to put the viewer in the centre of a moving image.

SHOWMEN

In the mid-1890s, fairground showmen quickly realised that moving images could provide a large return on quite a small investment. Randall Williams is thought to have been the first showman to include moving images as one of his attractions, when he showed films at the King's Lynn Mart Fair in 1897, but others quickly copied him, including the brothers George and John Green, William Taylor, Charles Thurston and Pat Collins and William Haggar. Haggar would later become one of the pioneers of Welsh cinema.

SOUND FILM

The first successful sound recording was made by Thomas Edison in 1877, nearly two decades before the birth of the cinema. It was inevitable that the two technologies would eventually be combined, but there were significant technical problems to be overcome first: volume level, sound quality (both of the original recordings and their mass reproduction), and synchronisation. Although sound films were shown in Paris as early as 1900, the audience had to listen to them through earphones, and a suitable amplification system would not be introduced until the turn of the 1920s. Early sound systems usually relied on accompanying gramophone records or phonograph cylinders. Music-hall impresario Sir Walter Gibbons preserved some of his stars using the latter method, which he released as Phono-Bio-Tableaux. A surviving example is *Kitty Mahone* (1900), featuring the song of that name being performed by music-hall star Lil Hawthorne. 1900 also saw the earliest known experiments in capturing soundtracks on the film itself. The latter would eventually solve the synchronisation problem (since the soundtrack could be printed down the side of the film strip, beside the images), but not until well into the 20th century.

STEREOSCOPY

The principle of stereoscopy, in which each eye is shown a slightly different image in order to fool the brain into perceiving depth, is several decades older than the cinema. Victorian scientist Charles Wheatstone (1802-75) successfully demonstrated stereoscopy in 1838, and with the invention of print photography shortly afterwards, stereoscopic photographs (which had to be viewed through a special viewer) became a mid-nineteenth-century craze. In the 1890s, several film pioneers experimented with stereoscopic moving images, and William Friese-Greene even filed a patent for a 3-D film process, which used a stereoscopic viewer to watch images projected side by side, but this was not considered practical for showing in cinemas. The first successful public screening of 3-D moving images did not take place until 1915.

TOPICAL FILMS

Essentially an actuality film covering a specific event that can usually be accurately located and dated, a topical film typically records an event likely to be of interest to local audiences: a festival, a parade, a sporting event, a visiting celebrity, the opening of a new building or launch of a ship, or simply shots of people going about their daily business. Cinema managers and/or their projectionists would shoot topical films themselves, and sometimes they would be commissioned by the organisers of the event being filmed, for publicity purposes.

TRICK FILMS

Many early film pioneers, including Georges Méliès in France and W.R. Booth in Britain, started out as stage magicians, and believed that the new film medium could help develop their skills as illusionists. Famously, Méliès discovered one of the basic principles of film special effects when his camera jammed while filming a mundane street scene in 1896, causing a bus to appear to turn into a hearse and women to transform into men. Immediately grasping the creative potential of this technique, Méliès went on to develop an astonishing array of effects using such techniques as jump-cuts, double exposures and superimpositions, reversing the film, and so on. In Britain, filmmakers such as Booth, G.A. Smith and James Williamson released similar short films, known as ‘trick films’ because they primarily revolved around one or more ‘tricks’ or special effects.