

History Part II

Sound

By the mid-1920's the film industry was getting nervous. Not as many people were coming to shows. The radio was popular. People could stay home and be entertained. And more people had cars. They would enjoy a ride in the country instead of a movie. The appeal of some top stars was dropping. One main company, Warner Brothers, was about to go broke. To save their skins, they took a daring chance. It was all or nothing. They sunk what money they had into a sound system. This was the Vitaphone. It used a record or disc that matched sound with the film.

This was not first time sound had been used. Way back in 1889, Edison had tried it with the Kinetoscope. Inventors had even gone so far as to run a huge belt from the back to the front of the theater. This ran the sound system at the same time the projector ran. D.W. Griffith had used sound in the early 1920's. But these did not take hold. Part of the reason was because audiences were accustomed to live music while films played. In the cheap film houses, they used a twangy piano. In others, they used an organ. Still others used a small orchestra. And Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* called for a 70-piece orchestra! So when sound was first used, it was weak compared to the live music the public was used to.

But Warner Brothers was in a tight spot. They had to find a new way to draw crowds. So they put everything they could into making this more than just a toy. The Vitaphone system had one main drawback. The disc and the film ran at the same time. But if a torn spot on the film had to be cut out, the sound would no longer match the film. They knew this was a problem. But they went ahead anyway. They first wanted to prove that sound films could make money.

The first Vitaphone film was in 1926. It was a bunch of film shorts and a main film called *Don Juan* with one piece of music. No one was too excited about this film. The film shorts were a new thing. And people thought it was just a passing fad. So they thought the sound was a passing thing too. But in 1927, the first true sound film made a hit. It was *The Jazz Singer*, starring Al Jolson. Most of this film was made as a silent. Written titles were used to show what was being said. The sound came when Jolson sang. And sound was used for background music. Also, Jolson talked in two or three scenes. But he had a great personality. He had charm. He lit into his songs with vigor. He was like magic. People flocked to see him. And talkies made their mark. Their power and appeal was clear. *The Jazz Singer* is thought of as the first **talkie**.

Silent films died over night. Warners next came out with the first all-talking film. It was done quickly and cheaply. And it was a poor film next The Jazz Singer. But it was shown to sell-out crowds everywhere. Now people liked sound. Other film studios had to follow suit. They wanted a share of the money to be made from talkies. The race was on. The big silent hits were brought back. They were re-made with music and talking. Within one year, all major films “talked.” The next would be “first 100% all – talking drama filmed outdoors.” “The first 100% all – talking, all – Negro film.” “The first 100% all-talking, all-college film.” Or “100% talking, 100% singing, 100% dancing film.” It grew and grew.

Many of the smaller moviemakers could not afford to buy the new sound equipment. They went out of business. And small show houses had problems too. It cost money to change their theaters to sound. And not all of the filmmakers used the same sound system. Warner’s used discs. Fox used the sound right on the film itself. (This is what is still used today.) So some places just had to board up until they, too,

could show talkies. At the end of 1928, only 1,300 theaters had sound systems. One year later, more than 9,000 had them. Profits showed a huge gain with sound. Before sound, there were 60 million people going to shows each week. Per week! The stock market crashed in 1929. But, by this time, the film industry had gained enough power and money to carry through.

The coming of the sound brought a sharp drop in film quality. Film had become an art. Men like Porter and Griffith had improved it. They had freed the camera. They had improved the pan. They showed the power of the cut. They had formed the art. But the sound undid all of this. Now, with sound, any noise was great. The public loved to hear its key stars talking and singing. Common sounds amazed them. A knock on a door. The crack of a gunshot. The roar of a car. Even the ring of a phone. But films had learned to talk. And that was first in everyone's mind. So, once again, the camera stood still. It was placed in a soundproof box. That way, its whir would not be picked up on the microphone. There were no more pans. There were no more cuts in the middle of scenes. The camera was frozen. Many of the films did nothing but talk. Even if the plot called for action, they just talked about it. They did not show it. Art was cast aside. Now most films just talked, talked, talked. Before long, people began to tire of this. The only real excitement was to try to spot where the mic was hidden. It turned into a game. A bowl of flowers in a strange place was a dead give-away. So was a very thick phone that was right in front of the actor. Soon films had to get better. And a few men fought to make them better, to make them an art once more. They had no rules to go on. They had to fight with the sound men. And they had to go against the fact that, for now, any film made money as long as it talked. But these men wanted more. They wanted good films again.

Ernst Lubitsch found a new element in talkies—silence! He found a film did not have to be all talking. Nor did a film have to record every sound on the set. He would shoot shots with no talking. For these the camera could move freely. Then he would add the music later. He found that he could shoot with no mic by timing each move to music. Each step, each door that shut, each move was timed to a beat of a song. The song could be “dubbed in” (added later). Another man, King Vidor, built on this. He shot whole scenes outdoors with no mic for a war film. Then, back in the studio, he added sounds. Breaking branches, the crash of bombs, the moans of dying men could be added. This led to more freedom in film. And they found that not everything that is heard must be seen. Why show someone walk out of a door? The slam of the door is enough. Why show a man shoot himself. The gunshot and the faces of on-lookers is enough.

The camera also was improved. At first it had to be kept in a soundproof box. It was too noisy. And that made for long, dull shots. But soon it was taken from the box. It was put in a soundproof “blimp.” This let it move more freely. The mics were improved, too. They soon were hung from long booms. That way they could be swung to follow the actors.

Sound also forced some actors out of business. Those who had foreign accents had to quit. And those who did not have good voices were out. Yet most top stars made the change with ease. And some gained greatly. Those who had begun on the stage could speak well in films. Sound made the biggest change in comedy. Early comedy was visual. Titles might have a few wisecracks. (“He had water on the brain. In the winter it froze and everything slipped his mind.”) With sound, humor became verbal. New comics sprang up. Among them were the Marx brothers, W.C. Fields, Ed Wynn, Jimmy Durante, and soon Bob Hope. Keaton, Lloyd, and Langdon lost out. Yet a few,

like Laurel and Hardy, gained from sound. They were stage trained so they could talk well. The showy talk of Hardy, the wimpers of Laurel enriched their style. Yet Buster Keaton was of the old style. At the end of the 1920's he was the highest paid comedian. But his style was silent, frozen-faced. Talking spoiled his appeal. He failed in talkies.

1930's

As soon as sound had come in, films changed. Things that would use a lot of sound were made into films. Musicals. Plays. Novels. Some of this carried over to the 1930's. But they had to change once more. So filmmakers, unsure of themselves, tried new types. And each time a film would be a hit, all studios would rush to make one like it. Therefore, films ran in clear cycles. This may have driven the viewers crazy. But, in this way, the film forms grew stronger. Each tried to make the film better than the last. So filmmakers forced themselves to learn the power of sound films.

Films reflect the times in which they are made. They tell something of the country. And they tell something of the people. The films of the 1930's reflected the poor state of the country. The Depression was at its peak. Banks failed and life-long savings were wiped out. The people were unhappy. They were unsure of their future. And they began to get tired of the kinds of films of the 1920's. People were caught in a drab, dull world. They wanted and needed escape. So Hollywood filled that need.

One way were the ultra-cheerful films. Plain musicals were not good enough. They now made huge musicals. A new director came on the scene---Busby Berkeley. Then things began to happen. He shot his scenes from all angles. He moved the camera high up to get a bird's-eye view of all dancers. He used low shots. Strange angles. Extreme close-ups. Trick shots. He also used large casts. Fleets of dancing girls.

Hundreds of extras. Armies of pianos. Giant swimming pools. Horses, elephants, trains, battleships. All would parade by the camera. All the songs were tuneful. The girls were pretty. And the musicals were grand fun. They were big. And they showed riches that Depression viewers could never hope to have.

America needed to laugh in those days. And it did. The Marx Brothers were making their first and best films. They joined verbal humor with their own brand of slapstick. The plots were usually blah. The camera sat still. Yet their jokes and insane actions carried the film. The dialog was racy. It was talk, true. But it was also more than talk. To get part of their humor, they tried not to make sense. In one film they look for a missing painting.

“We’ll search every room in the house,” says Groucho.

“What if it ain’t in this house?” says Chico.

“Then we’ll search the house next door.”

“What if there ain’t no house next door?”

“Then we’ll build one,” says Groucho. And the two start drawing up plans for building the house next door. Their humor fit the sound films well. And it fit the viewers well, too. The Marx brothers were good at wild teamwork. But W.C. Fields was the perfect sound comedian by himself. His raspy voice and mumbled jokes made him a hit in sound. And Depression viewers could like a man who felt he had to cheat to get by. Fields distrusted everyone, banks most of all. And viewers felt much the same way. So he came into his own in 1930’s comedy.

One trend to start in the 1930’s was gangster films. In 1931 alone, they made 50 of these films. People wanted films that were more real. And these were fast and hard-hitting. They crackled with speed. They used the “tough guy” as a hero. The new stars

for these were James Cagney and Edward G. Robinson. They used a new way of talking. They got rid of the stiff or flowery talk. Instead, they were crisp and to the point. “He got bumped off.” “He’s goin’ to rat on us.” And they were based on a fact. The stories came from the news headlines. So they carried an excitement for viewers.

Next came the films of social problems. They exposed the rackets. They showed crooked politics. Bank failures. Rotten newsmen. Prison brutality. Viewers liked them. These films gave an easy solution. People seemed to like thinking that jailing or shooting could solve everything. Most of these films were cheap. And most showed a dim view. But a few were true to life and well done. *I Am a Fugitive from the Chain Gang* was a good one. It was based on a true case. And it shocked the public so much that they forced a change of the chain-gang system. These films dealt with important themes. But, in a way, they gave as much comfort as comedy. They seemed to say, “Look how much worse things could be. Look at the fix the Depression put these folks in. Maybe you’re not doing so bad after all.”

As often happens in times of gloom and worry, there was a big cycle of horror films. They were grim but made with care. They did not use blood and gore. Instead, they built mood and eerie feelings. *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* started the cycle. The greatest horror of the time was *King Kong*. It joined the three most important things for a film in those days. It used a heroine who rose from rags to riches. It used jungle adventure. And it used a monster. These horror films made stars of Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi.

Even romance films changed. They, too, had to fit the times. The heroine lost her virtue. She took to the streets or became a rich man’s mistress. And she did it all to make money to feed her babies or for a sick husband. It was always poverty that drove

her to a life of shame. Depression viewers liked this. Perhaps it made them feel “not so poor.” They had it bad, but not so bad as this woman.

But films were going a little bit too far. They made heroes of gangsters. Stars played prostitutes. Films were a little too tough. They were a little too free. The studios tried to give the public what they wanted. But they were also showing the worst side of life. Sex and crime were shown again and again. People began to complain. Church groups protested. Sermons were preached against films. Newspapers spoke out against them. Women’s clubs fought them. Again, as in the 1920’s, the public was angry. But this time they took action. It was not enough for filmmakers to say they would not make crude films any more. The Catholic Church set up the Legion of Decency in 1933. This was a code for films. And the church stood behind it. Any film that did not meet the code would be banned. By this time, there was so much sex and crime shown that other churches were behind the Catholic code too. They all wanted to clean up movies.

So 1933 marked the end of the “let’s-take-a-chance” films. No more would films do “anything for a laugh.” Films had to change. They lost their tough ways. They were no longer crude. One of the first stars to go was Mae West. She was known for vulgar jokes. And she was frank with sex. Too frank, the Legion thought. Other stars had to change too. James Cagney, Clark Gable, and Edward G. Robinson were gangsters. They soon had to learn to be good guys.

The “Family Appeal” began in 1933. They made films that the whole family could see. By 1935, most films were of this type. Yet Hollywood saw the family as a dull family. It was a family who wanted to be entertained but did not want to think. And it did not want to be shocked or offended. So horror films died out. Gangsters faded. Some of the glamour that was always a part of films seemed to go too. Now came the

cycle of films for escape. Much was relaxing and enjoyable. Big westerns came back. They seemed to say that the Depression could be licked. All people had to do was go back to the spirit of the old west.

Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers made a hit with big musicals. They were graceful and light. Will Rogers became popular. And Shirley Temple was the greatest hit since Rin Tin Tin. The child actress was rushed through film after film. Gene Autrey, the singing cowboy, came in big, too. "Screwball" comedies also started. They were partly a reaction against day-to-day hardships. These films said, "Life is miserable. Life is dishonest. So why take life seriously? Laugh and things won't look so bad." Screwball comedies poked fun at all, like W.C. Fields' film debut in 1936 in *Poppy*. Yet their stories used real life as a jumping-off point. They were about fear, hunger, and lack of jobs. Yet they were comedies. They turned the world on its ear.

As the 1930's wore on, tensions grew. And a new cycle began. These were films about hardships. They dealt with slums, labor unrest, lack of jobs, the dust storms. They showed the common man as the strong. And they showed a new hope for better times. Yet they did not use "happy endings." They showed the strength of democracy as a way to solve problems. *The Grapes of Wrath* is one. Its end showed faith in the American people to win through.

Walt Disney films were coming on the scene, too. These fit well with the "Family Appeal." *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was Disney's first full-length feature. And in the late 1930's came *Gone with the Wind*. This was the biggest box-office success ever. It made more than \$70 million. NO film ever made so much money before. And none after - - for another 30 years. Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh starred. The public would have it no other way. They loved Gable. He was the biggest asset

MGM had at this time. Bigger than any buildings, equipment, or sets. And the success of *Gone with the Wind* hid some of the bad filming of the time.

1940's

The 1940's had quite a mix. Some of the worst and some of the best films were made then. As World War II drew nearer, films showed the joy of military life. Filmmakers found the War Department would help them. They could use bombers, ships—even West Point. Most films did not show fighting. They dealt with the training. And they used it as a backdrop for a love story of musical.

As soon as the U.S. joined the war, films changed. Germans and Japanese became stock villains. All kinds of films were packed with jokes and insults aimed at Hitler. The films were strong propaganda. Even the love stories and musicals were loaded with pro-USA messages. They were meant to unite the country. They were to make people pull together and feel proud. Today, these films are dated. It is harder to watch one of these than a 1930's film.

With the war, there came a need for light films again. Tensions were great. The people had enough troubles with the war. They didn't need more. They wanted to escape. So Hollywood gave them what they wanted. There was a string of South Sea island adventures. Musical came back. And, of course, comedies. Musical had less and less story. Instead, they used big bands, big singers, and lots of songs. Frank Sinatra, Glenn Miller, and Tommy Dorsey were some of the best at the time.

Comedy was used a great deal. Laurel and Hardy were making their last films. There were good films, but they were not popular. Most people thought slapstick was out

of date. W.C. Fields made a few more comedies. Of these, The Bank Dick is the best. Situation comedies also came back.

The star system came to its peak in the early 1940's. The top male stars were Clark Gable, James Cagney, Gary Cooper, Cary Grant, and Robert Taylor. Some of these, of course, had to go to war. A few new stars took their places. Kirk Douglas and Burt Lancaster came in big. They were more tough and rugged. Often films would be made with actors who were too old or too young to go to war. But it was the women who really had a field day. They played in westerns, musicals, thrillers, comedies, anything. The key stars were Betty Grable, Rita Hayworth, Joan Crawford, Bette Davis, Ginger Rogers, Lana Turner, Ingrid Bergman, and Olivia de Haviland.

The war ended in 1945, and films changed. They dropped their false joy. They began to get heavier again. And they began to be more real. A string of rough, tough, real thrillers hit the screen. Most were spy thrillers or private eye thrillers. War had made people used to the sight of blood. So the private eyes faced lots of it. Killings. Beatings. Knifings. Whippings. Hand-to-hand fights. All came to the screen. New westerns came, too. The hero was no longer the "Good, Good Guy." He went back to being the "Bad, Good Guy" or the "Bad, Bad Guy." He did not do what was right. He would cheat and lie and drink. The hero of the old west had lost his virtue.

A cycle of films showed the post-war problems. Some showed how hard it was for servicemen to settle down to life. They dealt with lack of housing. The black-market. Emotional changes. One of the strongest was *The Best Years of Our Lives*. It did a top job of showing a war veteran and his problems.

Mental problems were another cycle. These were of people going insane. In most, the viewers knew at the start who the killer was. Yet they watched it mostly to see

what tortures the killer would think of. Soon all kinds of films took this strange twist. Even love stories showed one of the lovers as insane. The mad, twisted mind became a new subject for horror films.

In the late 1940's, the United States began its hearing on "Un-American" activities. There was a great fear of Communism. The House Un-American Activities Committee checked films. This put filmmakers in fear. They quit making films with a message. Instead, they made bland films. They towed the mark. And, later, as films began again to carry a message, they were not the same. New films would show problems. But the problems would be those of just one person. An alcoholic. A drug addict. A delinquent. Films did not dare to show the cause of these problems. They could not even hint that the problems had anything to do with the country or the times.

1950's

The 1950's had very few good films. Many new techniques were being tried. So it took time to learn to use these new things well. TV came in strong in the 1950's. Now people could sit at home and be entertained. TV began to compete with the film industry. So filmmakers searched for ways to beat TV.

Sheer size. One easy way was to make films that were "bigger and better" than TV. Sheer size was the key. They spent huge sums of money on each film. They used some of the biggest names. They tried for large casts. To spend this much, they had to cut costs in other ways. So they got rid of the old "B" film, a cheap, hour-long film that often ran as the second feature. Many the old Roy Rogers and Gene Autrey films were "B" films. So many of them were run on TV that no one came to the theaters to see them. Cutting out "B" films hurt film making in a way. "B" films had been a way to train new writers, directors, and stars. They could learn by doing these films. With these gone, the

only place left to learn was TV. The results began to show too. The new men tried to use what they learned in TV. This made for a lot of talkative, blah films. But just cutting out cheap films and making big ones didn't help much.

3-D. Next, filmmakers tried new techniques that TV could never do. Again they hoped to beat the competition. In 1953 they tried 3-D movies. These had a feeling of depth. They were also cheap and easy to make. To watch them, people had to wear special glasses. But they didn't seem to mind. The new depth delighted them. Just as they had been to first hear sound. Just as they had been to first see things move. But the new idea soon died. So many poor films were made in 3-D that the people got tired of them. Film after film was packed with all kinds of flying forms. Ping pong balls bounced at the audience. Spears flew at them. Lions leaped at them. Bats swooped at them. In one, the bad man even spat at them. They did not care about art or good taste. There was no plot. In just one year, they became known as trash. By 1954, they were "out of date."

Wide Screen. Another way they tried to beat TV was with the wide screen. It was new. And it was something TV could not do. Cinerama was used first. It had a wide, curving screen. It was three times as long as any other screens. So, to shoot the picture for it, the camera had to have three lenses. And three projectors were needed to show it. This gave a great feeling of depth. To go with this, they used six-track stereo sound. Speakers were placed all over the theater. So the viewer saw a picture that curved around them. It was great! But all of this cost too much. Most theaters could not afford it. Then 20th Century Fox came up with Cinema-Scope. This also used the wide screen. But it needed only one projector with a special lens. Fox was smart. They did not rush to make a cheap film. Instead, they spend a lot of time and money on one. It was the \$5-million film, *The Robe*. People flocked to see it.

But the wide screen caused new problems. Now the old film “grammar” had to be thrown out. Vertical action was not strong on the wide screen. Close ups were no good. It was strange to see an actor’s face stretched across a 60-foot screen. And it looked even stranger if the screen had just held a whole battleship. Proportions were off. The sheer size made the changes out of scale. But good directors soon learned new ways to handle the larger screen. And the wide screen is still used today.

Rough, Savage Films. As films tried to beat TV, they grew more crude. It was not enough for a thriller to thrill. It had to be rough, tough, and savage, too. Cruel beatings. Savage killings. These were the “new thrills.” Kind, good heroes were thrown out. Now the hero had to be mean and cruel. He would cheat to get to the top. He was a tough man.

Selling Oldies. To pay for these, Hollywood sold old films to TV. But this back fired. People stayed home even more. They could enjoy gentle comedy or the charm of Shirley Temple at home. Why go to the theater? There they would have to watch violence. They would see cruel characters. They would have to put up with unpleasant things. At home they could see friendly films of past years.

“B” Films. In the mid-1950’s, TV was catching up. The wide screen was wearing off. People were staying home again. Producers found they could earn money on big films. But these cost millions to make. Next they tried new “B” films. These were cheap films. They were so cheap, in fact, that they couldn’t lose money. These were not like the harmless “B” films of the past. Instead, they were ugly and in poor taste. They sold just because of the bad things in them. They were sold as “adult” films. Yet these were some of the worst trash on the screen.

One of the best things to come out of the 1950's was the color cartoon. Disney, MGM, and Warner Brothers were all making them. These used the same things as the old slapstick of the 1920's. The sight gags were brought back. And so was the fun and spirit. They used violence. Yet cartoons were an unreal world. So violence in them was fun instead of cruel.

Color in all films was now common. It had been used in the 1930's. Then color was enough to get people to come to a film. But the hard times of the Depression and World War II cut the use of color. After the war, films tried it again. And by the 1950's people expected to see color films. Of course, color was not as crisp and clear as today. But films had found something new once more.

1960's

TV competition was the big fear of filmmakers in the 1950's. But, by the 1960's, Hollywood had found a way to deal with TV. They would compete no more. Instead, Hollywood began making TV shows. It was safer to get along than to fight. After all, there was a lot of money to be made in TV, so they set up TV studios on their own lots. They used their men and equipment. All for a sum, of course. They also sold old films to TV. So TV did not destroy films, as they had feared. Instead, by 1968, TV made up one third of Hollywood's income.

The 1950's had brought some other changes. And by the 1960's, filmmakers had learned to adapt to them. One was the court ruling on monopolies. It said that the same people couldn't own theaters and studios. This cut Hollywood's income. So Hollywood could no longer turn out a steady flow of films. Independent production began. These

were small studios. They could do as they wanted as long as they made money. This, in part, caused the fall of censorship in the 1960's.

The independents and foreign films were the first to use a lot of sex. The frank love scenes and bare flesh drew crowds. Soon major studios were losing money. So they threw out the Production Code of 1933. All things that were against the Code were now shown on the screen. That new freedom led to a lot of trash. But it also led to some honest views of basic human problems. In 1968, the Motion Picture Association set up a new system. They set up a board to grade films. They rated them as follows: G—general audiences; PG—parental guidance; R—restricted, no one under 17 admitted unless with a parent; and X—no one under 17 admitted.

The early 1960's had many big films—Blockbusters. These were costly to make. But if they hit on target, they could earn millions. Most were biblical. And they had their share of sex. These were a carry-over from the 1950's and soon died out. Huge musicals took their place. The first was *West Side Story*, about New York street gangs. Soon *Sound of Music* set the pace. This made \$135 million, more than any film before it. Others in the cycle were *My Fair Lady*, *Mary Poppins*, *Camelot*, *Paint Your Wagon*. Yet the Musical Buster was different. It did not stoop to sex and violence. It was gentle, happy, and tuneful. Musical were big while they lasted. But they did not even last until the end of the 1960's.

With the fall of censorship, violence came in strong. A new trend was the super-spy. The super-cool hero was James Bond, Agent 007. Bond had money. He attracted women. He had gadgets of all kinds. He was an expert in judo and karate. He lived in a kind of fairyland of spies. The double “O” meant he was licensed to kill. And he did a

lot of that. The films were sheer fantasy. Yet the super-spy films had more sex and violence than ever before.

Violence spread throughout films of the 1960's. *Bonnie and Clyde* in 1967 was very violent. Yet it was not the kind of violence of James Bond films. It was not fairy-tale violence. This was stark and real. It was a kind of mindless violence of real life. The film did not try to glorify it. Instead the film was a sort of black comedy. It made viewers laugh. But it left them deeply upset by it. The filmmakers were concerned with violence. They were not trying to make a happy film to make viewers feel good.

The teen-age movie goer was another target for films. Most films aimed at teens were cheap, low quality films. To sell them, they booked the films in hundreds of theaters at the same time. Then they put out many hard-sell ads. They had to get the viewers quickly before word of the mouth got around that the film was no good. At first there were horror films like *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*. Then they shifted to the beach films like *Beach Party* or *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini*. These films showed clean-cut teens surfing and dancing to rock music. They didn't smoke, drink, or use drugs. They just wore tiny bikinis and showed off a lot of flesh. The two big stars of these were Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello. Next came a group of cycle films like *Wild Angels*. These were about the free-roving motorcycle clubs.

Horror films took a new twist. The actors became mentally sick. The old horror films used to be about the evils of science. Monsters. Werewolves. Creatures from outer space. But real science became too well known for that any more. So films turned modern man into his own monster. Psychotics. Mentally ill killers. Devil worshipers. These were the new monsters. Bette Davis and Joan Crawford, old stars, became well known again. The public loved to see the beautiful stars of the past turn into crazy old

hags doing evil. Some of the best known films of this type were *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*, *Hush . . . Hush*, *Sweet Charlotte*, and Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*.

By the 1960's, the western had changed, too. No more cheap westerns were made into film. TV was now doing that. But the big westerns were still made into films. One of these, *How the West Was Won*, cost \$12 million to make.

Even though black actors made their way into films in the 1930's, they were not considered serious stars until the 1960's. In the 30's they danced, sang, and were laughed at. In 1960 Sidney Poitier became a true star, but unfortunately he was the only black actor to reach stardom. For the most part, films ignored the problem of civil rights in this country. "I'm the only one," said Poitier. "I'm the only Negro actor who works with any degree of regularity. I represent 10 million in this country. . . . I'm the only one for these people to identify with on the screen." Poitier had been acting a long time before anyone dared to let him star. Then an unknown director gave him the lead in a low-budget film, *Lilies of the Field*. And even then, Poitier could not move into the hero role alone. So the director linked him with someone the public could not attack. The film showed him helping a group of Christian nuns. From there, Poitier took lead roles in more and more films. Soon films began, at least, to brush on the topic of white-black problems.

The end of the 1960's brought a new wave of films. These were the low-budget films. They did not use known stars. They did not have large casts. But they had a strength all their own. They dealt with the current scene. Daily life. Feelings. The generation gap. So they seemed more true to life. Filming was rough, fast, and lively. This made them seem more real too. And they tried to do more than just entertain. They tried to involve the viewers. Moviemakers wanted viewers to see their own parts in the current scene and feel their own power.