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THE
COMIC
BOOK
HISTORY OF

ANIMATION



THE COMIC BOOK HISTORY OF ANIMATION

WRITTEN BY:

FRED VAN LENTE

ART & LETTERS BY:

RYAN DUNLAVEY

COLOR BY:

ADAM GUZOWSKI

EDITED BY:

RILEY FARMER

SUPERVISING EDITOR:

TOM WALTZ

DESIGN ASSISTS BY:

AMAURI OSORIO



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Though the *cartoon short* hung around in movie theaters for a couple of decades after the war, many industry veterans saw its days were numbered.

Terrytoons' *Paul Terry*, who had begun his career with *Bray Studios* way back in **1915**, declaimed, "The [short] cartoon has no drawing power in a theater.



"You go to a theater and *enjoy* a cartoon, to be sure, but you'd pay the same amount of money to see the show if they *didn't* have a cartoon. It's sort of an added something that doesn't make any difference to a show whether it is there or not."

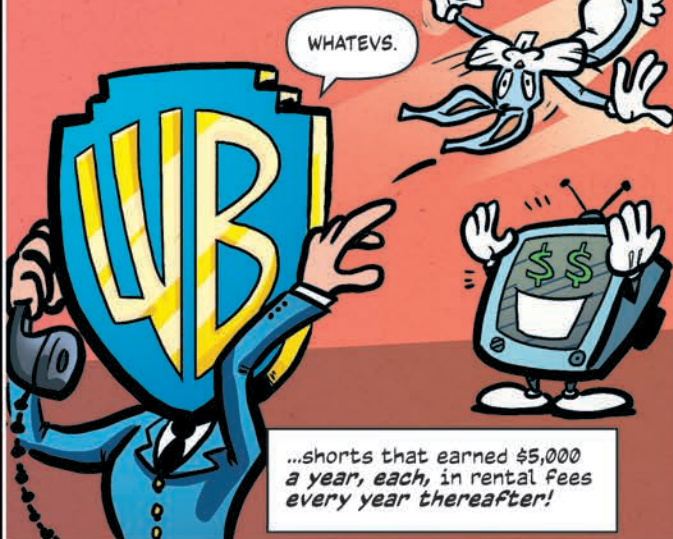
The short tradition was dealt a major blow in the Supreme Court anti-trust decision *United States v. Paramount Pictures*, which ended (among other things) the practice of "*block booking*": studios could no longer force random short subjects and B-pictures onto theater owners along with the movies they actually *wanted* to screen.

That ruling was handed down in **1948**, the same year **television ownership** began exploding in households across the U.S.



The three main TV networks needed to fill **airtime**--particularly during the **day**, when kids were watching--and the studios' library of old cartoons seemed the perfect fit.

Continuing his lifelong disdain for cartoons, Harry Warner sold off all of the pre-1948 **LOONEY TUNES** to TV for **\$3,000 a piece**...



...shorts that earned **\$5,000 a year, each**, in rental fees **every year thereafter!**

Though the **LOONEY TUNES** unit lingered until 1963, director **Friz Freleng** and executive **David DePatie** left the shrinking studio to form their own house.



In cartoons' absence, animated **credits** for live-action films very much became a thing. DePatie-Freleng created **THE PINK PANTHER** for the opening of the 1963 Blake Edwards movie (which is about a big **diamond**, not a big cat).

In 1955, Paramount sold all **two thousand** of its shorts to various TV outlets for **\$4.5 million**. The crown jewels were the Fleischer shorts--**Popeye** in particular.

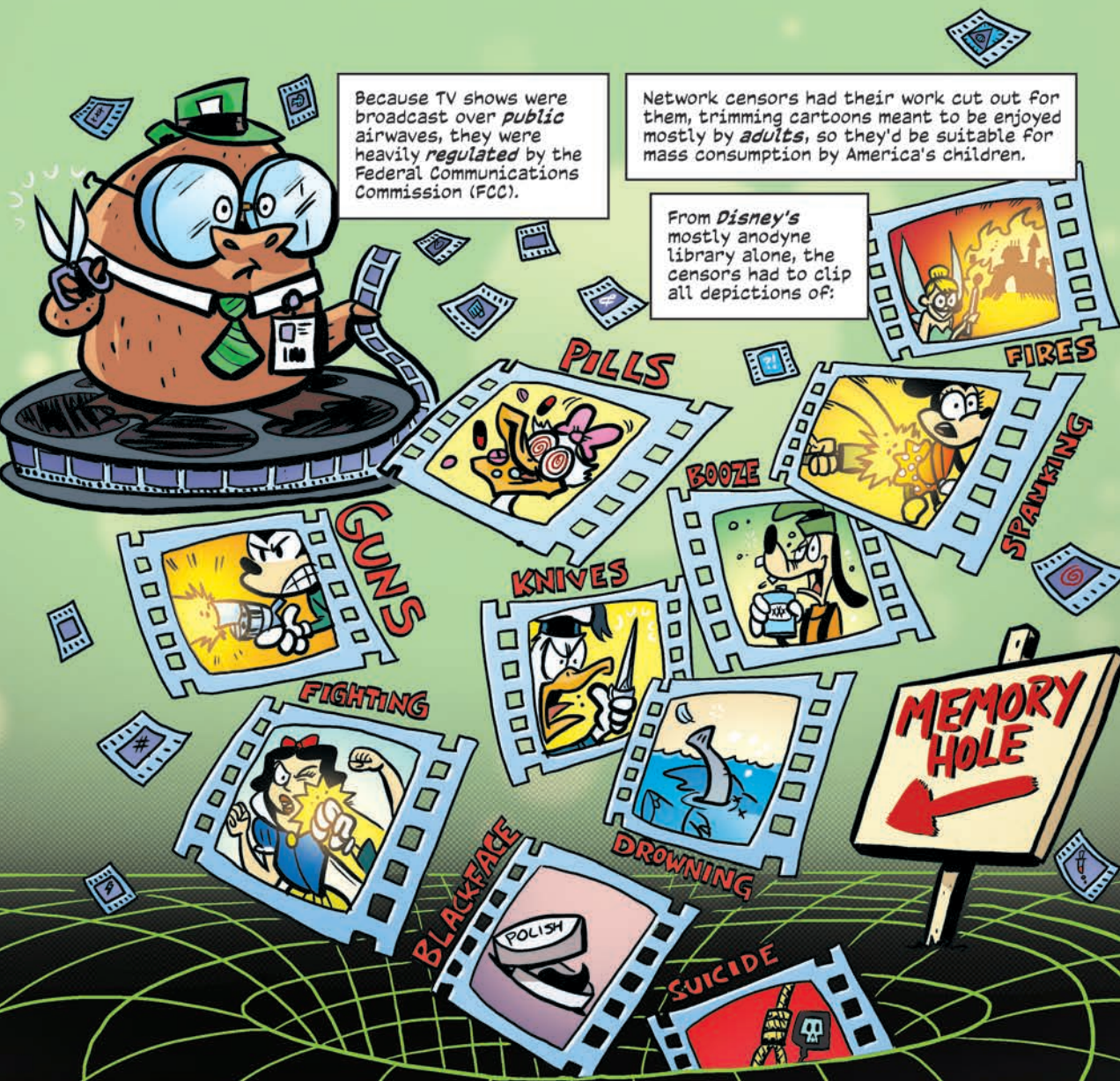


That same year, CBS bought **Terrytoons** lock, stock, and barrel for **\$3.5 million** to get their hands on **Mighty Mouse** and **Heckle & Jeckle**.



Disney's shorts found a home at ABC, which on October 27, 1954, began airing the hourlong **"Disneyland"** program hosted by Walt himself, which made him even more famous than he already was.





The sheer amount of Golden-Era animation that will never be seen on official TV or streaming any time soon because of its dependence on **racist** jokes and imagery is staggering.

To take just one example: the first appearance of MGM's *Tom & Jerry**, *PUSS GETS THE BOOT* (1940), hinges on the offensive caricature of a maid, "Mammy Two-Shoes."

* THOUGH THE MOUSE HAS NO NAME AND THE CAT IS "JASPER."

The MGM cartoon unit, headed by Tom & Jerry co-creators *William Hanna and Joe Barbera*, had won *fifty* Oscars since 1940...

...but in 1957, an MGM bean-counter calculated that re-releasing an *old* short would bring in *90 percent* of the revenue of releasing a *new* one--without the \$40,000-\$65,000 production cost.

CLOSE THE STUDIO. LAY EVERYBODY OFF.

Barbera writes in his autobiography *MY LIFE IN TOONS*:

"MORE OFTEN THAN I CARE TO REMEMBER, I HAVE FOUND MYSELF IN THE POSITION OF *JERRY MOUSE*."

"THE CARTOON INDUSTRY, LIKE ANY OTHER INTENSELY CREATIVE ENDEAVOR THAT BECOMES A BIG BUSINESS WITH POTENTIAL FOR GREAT PROFIT AND EVEN MORE DISASTROUS LOSS, IS FULL OF *PREDATOR-PREY RELATIONSHIPS*."

Very quickly, though, Hanna and Barbera found New York City TV networks opening doors that had been closed by Hollywood studios.

Columbia Pictures had sold a bunch of their old shorts to NBC, but without any big-name stars attached to them. *Screen Gems*, their TV unit, asked Hanna and Barbera if they could create brand-new material to accompany them.

So Hanna-Barbera wound up *re-hiring* all their old MGM co-workers and set up their own studio!

They figured out how to make cartoons with 90 percent less *drawing* than a theatrical short, and brought *THE RUFF AND REDDY SHOW* (1957-1960), a rejected MGM pitch, to NBC.

One of Hanna-Barbera's early animators Lou Scheimer remembers, "The *collar* and *bow tie* meant that, if the characters' heads were animated, the bodies could remain the *same cels*, and only the heads from the neck up would have to be animated."

Screen Gems' John Mitchell sold Hanna-Barbera's **THE HUCKLEBERRY HOUND SHOW** to *Kellogg's* in 1958.

When Barbera asked **Daws Butler** to come up with a Southern dialect for their star, he said:

"FROM WHAT PART OF THE SOUTH? THERE'S AT LEAST TEN DISTINCT DIALECTS I KNOW."



Butler picked a *Tennessee* accent, based on a guy he knew who never got shook up, no matter what the circumstance.

NO TINKLING OF GLASSES OR NOISE DURING THE HUCKLEBERRY HOUND SHOW!



Huckleberry's preternaturally *even keel* became the key gag of the series and made him a *huge hit* with *hipsters*.

In 1959, **HUCKLEBERRY** was the first cartoon to win the **Emmy** for children's programming.

Unfortunately, Hanna dropped his statue and the wing broke off (fortunately, it was easily fixed).



In these early days of TV, a *single company* would often foot the bill for an *entire show* as an exclusive sponsor.



Market surveys showed kids associated **HUCKLEBERRY** co-stars **Yogi Bear** and **Boo Boo** with *Kellogg's Corn Flakes*, even though Kellogg's had plenty of cartoon mascots of their own.