

The golden age of hollywood film studies essay



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Hollywood was well known as the Golden Age of Hollywood in 1920s. In this decade, people started to pay attention to the movies which made the movie industry developed rapidly. With the combination of many factors, the Hollywood started a revolution that had changed the world. First of all, the most primary factor is—the technology. In the early 1920s, the technology had improved more rapidly and completely than any period before, so the studios finally were able to produce movies with sound in it, which was the basis of the whole evolution. It was the biggest progress that the movie industry had ever made since the movie was invented. It deserved the name " evolution". Just imagine, if the movies we watch today still did not have any sound, then, no matter how great it looked or how 3D it is, nobody would like it, because it is not a complete movie. The sound in movie is like the soul in human; without their soul people are not people anymore. In the same way, the movie without sound is not a movie, but the movie producer did not realized this at that time. In the beginning of this evolution, the Hollywood studio did not believe that the movie with sound could be very successful. However in 1927, after the Hollywood published the first " talkie" movie " The Jazz Singer", and it turned out the producer was so wrong. " The Jazz Singer" became an evolutionary step for the movie industry all over the world. The popularity of The Jazz Singer erased any doubts about the popular appeal of the sound, and within a year, Xie 2300 theaters were wired for sound. The arrival of sound produced a sharp upsurge in movie attendance, which jumped from 50 million a week in the mid-20s to 110 million in 1929. (" The Rise of Hollywood and the arrival of Sound" 16) The success of " The Jazz Singer" had made the Hollywood feel so confident about the talkie

movie and enlighten them to make more and more talkie movie in the future. As a result, the number of talkie movie had increased rapidly and had completely overtaken silent films in just a few years later. It was a great contribution for the whole entertainment industry that helped other entertainment industry develop their technology at the same time to serve the public better. Nobody could say The Jazz Singer was not a huge success, but the Hollywood did not feel satisfied with the big accomplishment that The Jazz Singer had made, they wanted to be better and more dictatorial, so they kept developing their movies with this spirit. It is a logical thing they would absolute concern after they had made an evolution, just as if a man had invented or discovered something that anyone in the world do not know but him, he would sell it or apply a patent to protect his own benefit. In this case Hollywood could not keep this as a secret and it could not restrict the technology either. So the Hollywood must do something, something would help it become the only one successful movie company in the US. In order to achieve this goal Hollywood had to beat all its enemies. It is extremely difficult and even impossible, but it actually did it, Hollywood had beaten out rival such as Culver City and Burbank as the place most associated with the film industry. It is the second amazing thing that the Hollywood did, which not only lead a new movie technology revolution but also established the position in public and all over the world. As a result, a couple of month later, Xie 3the Hollywood movie studio system controlled what films were shown across the whole country. The Hollywood movie producer was not the only one who took advantages from this movie revolution, but the actors, lots of actors and actresses became famous and rich because of that. The vaudeville used to be the most popular show through the US, but obviously <https://assignbuster.com/the-golden-age-of-hollywood-film-studies-essay/>

after the sound movie rose so rapidly and immediately the vaudeville could not be famous anymore, its position were completely replaced by the talkie movie; therefor, a huge number of the vaudeville actors had to migrating to film in order to find new work. However it is a bad new to the movie actors at the same time, many silent movie actors saw their careers ruined by the rise of the sound in films, some unfortunately had bad voices or thick accents, other had trouble remembering their line, in any event, a fair number of silent film's biggest stars could not back in the motion picture industry anymore, apparently the would be replaced by the vaudeville stars well as radio actors. It could be a disaster to the old movie stars, thousands of them lost their jobs, some were fortunately hired by some company which still have relationship with movies, while others were not as fortunately as them; they had to give up their old career no matter how much they liked it and chose a new job. On the other hand the vaudeville actors were lucky, more than 90% of them were hired by Hollywood studios to play the BGM for sound movies. Sometimes, only if a man who had a good voice and a not bad appearance, he could be famous and wealthy in a short time, not matter how his social position it was or how poor he was. A perfect example is Stepin Fetchit, he was a black man who came America from Africa, when he arrived he was so poor that he needed to consider where he could live or even Xie 4What was for dinner, but he was chosen by Hollywood's studio, and became a huge Hollywood star to white people, and he became a millionaire during the depression and played in 51 movies beginning in one year! He was not the only man who lived in a dreamy life, even there were lots of actors richer than him. It is not hard to imagine that how luxurious life they lived in and how famous they were, for instance Gloria Swanson's bath tub was high

purity gold! Similarly, Tom Mix who had acted as a cowboy had his name raised a top his house in six feet high letters. Even the people who were new in the movie industry as long as they had wonderful voice and their appearance were not so bad they were all being rich. With the big stars helping, the Hollywood movie industry improved once again, and became the real popular and fashion among the US, in the midst of that development one industry had to be mentioned---- the Warner Brothers. The Warner Brother is an American producer of film, television, and music entertainment which was found in 1903 by Harry, Albert, Sam and Jack. It was a well-known movie company since it was found, however their economy was not as good as their reputation, although it published movies every years, but the income was too little to afford their high expend; finally a big financial crisis appeared in the beginning of 1920s, thus they need to do something new, something that will earn enough money for them to save the WB from depression. In 1925, The WB thought about the synchronized sound (then known as " talking pictures" or " talkies") for the first time, it was Sam's inspiration, it led a revolution to whole entertainment industry in just few years, but nobody realized how fabulous it is at that time, they just wanted to innovate, it is their last opportunity and they had no choice. Then, in theXie 5next year they published the Dan Juan, the first movie with that new thought, although the film was silent, it featured a large number of Vitaphone shorts at the beginning; people liked it! It is not because how good the movie was, it is about the new thought; they found a new way to show the audience the movie. On the other hand, in order to hype the Dan Juan's release, Harry acquired the large Piccadilly Theater in Manhattan, New York and renamed it the Warner Theater; everything turned out is excellent,

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the WB earned a large sum of income indeed, but they did not stop by that, they always wanted more. In the following year, the WB's studio spent all the fund they earned to produce "The Jazz Singer". Once again, they put everything into their movie and the consequences is obvious. Thanks to the success of "The Jazz Singer", the studio finally got rid of the financial crisis, and the WB became one of the top movie companies in United State. The technology and the movie industry were not the only reason made this decade call the Golden Age of Hollywood, the world outside of the Hollywood studio was wonderful too at the same time. First, the Hollywood sign of course, it is more than a symbol of the Hollywood culture, it could be called a perfect record of the Hollywood's development. Everything was started in 1923, a real estate developer named H. J. Whitley suggested his friend Harry Chandler, the owner of the LA Times Paper, to build something that can advertise the Hollywood to all over the country, because Whitley had already had a sign to advertise his estate, which worked well and gave him a fantastic reputation. Most brilliant idea just come from some small inspirations, Whitley just wanted to build an advertisement for Hollywood and earn some money, beyond everyone's expectation, the Hollywood Sign turned into such a treasure and Whitley became the father of the Hollywood Sign no doubt. Harry accepted Whitley's advice in a short time, because he had the same idea too, therefore the Hollywood Sign building project began fluently. The fund was from Chandler's paper; the design was from Thomas Fisk Goff, a famous building designer, and the building work is from Whitley. That might be just a simple consequence, but it happened so unbelievable; it is more like a coincidence or even it is their destiny. The sign was 30 feet (9.1 m) wide and 45 feet (14 m) high with 13 white letters "Hollywoodland";

the whole sign was studded with 4, 000 light bulbs, " HOLLY," " WOOD," and " LAND" would light up individually, before lighting up entirely. (" A History of the Hollywood Sign, 1923-2009". 2) The whole sign's structure was wood, it is not an easy work to find such much wood, and even though they found it but they did not have any equipment to put them on the top of the Santa Monica mountain, but these obstacles could not stop Whitley's desire to finish this work, so he hired tens of man to carry these wood by themselves to the top of the mountain, this work took him more than 5 weeks; after this, there was another challenge—they had to collect 4000light bulbs and made these light bulbs constantly changing, because of the technology limit in that decade, this was even more difficult than last one. They almost found all sources that could get bulbs to buy these bulbs and let the city's best technician to make these bulb work. After 2 months' work, the Hollywood Sign was eventually completed, it cost more than \$21000 which was truly a lot of money in that year for Times newspaper. Whitley planned to hang this sign for about 1 year and half, but this sign became the Hollywood's symbol, Whitley decided to still leave it on the mountain, Xie 7thus we can still see it in LA now. Although ironically this sign used to be just for advertised, this truth did not influence the high reputation it has in the public. Except the sign, the Hollywood still had lots of notable history which still have influence now. The most famous one is The Academy Awards, which informally known as The Oscars. In 1929, the motion picture industry got its own award ceremony, The Academy Awards, for the first time. The award ceremony took place at the Hotel Roosevelt in Hollywood. Even though it was basically a dinner party with a small award ceremony tacked on, it was the first Oscars after all. In this first ceremony which was for films made in 1927 and 1928,

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the committee announced the "Wings" as the Best Picture. This ceremony is the divide of the silent movie and the talkie movie, the silent movie was officially abolished, and the talkie movie was in charge. On the other hand, not everything happened in this Golden Age is positive, there were lots of negative event at the same time. With the movie evolution, the actors became more and more wealthy and powerful. Money, power, everyone in this world wants that, it could satisfy almost everything people want, such as vanity, desire, even could help them to gain respect. But everything has another side, the money and the power they had were exactly led them to want more, and made them want to attract people's attention eagerly; as a result, they were finally got into trouble. Hollywood's first major scandal was about an actor named Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, he was on the top of the Hollywood movie industry. Arbuckle had signed a three-year deal with Paramount for \$1 million, making him the highest paid star of the time. There was nothing new that such a huge scandal happened on such a legendary man; in 1921, Arbuckle was arrested and charged with the death and rape of Virginia Rappe in San Francisco, and this became Arbuckle's career's transition, his career was effectively ruined with the help of newspapers running stories about his supposed guilt. It was an inevitable thing for everyone who had ever reached his career's top, even in 21 century, look at these stars nowadays, barely of them have no scandals. What people concern about is neither what did they do nor how did they do, it should be why did they do such things. Apparently, they both regretted about what they had done, but did they ever consider about the punishment they were going to take when they were doing? This is their secret they would never tell, even they did not realize that by themselves. Maybe people

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need to take some time to learn how to restrain themselves better rather than always deliberate how to earn money, it is necessary and it could avoid so many crimes and scandals effectively. Another 2 major scandal is about two actors, the first one was Olive Thomas, a famous young girl who had won the Most Beautiful Girl contest; and the second one was Wallace Reid, a major actors of Hollywood, they both died from drug abuse, although it was mainly because of the immature medical science, the public still regard it as a scandals, because no one knew for sure if their death was accidental, intentional, or if they were murdered. After these scandals, people began to see Hollywood as immoral, and the Hollywood's dark side began to appear to the public. In order to restore public confidence and reduce the government's suspicion, Hollywood had to pay a lot of money to the media companies and apologize to the public. The actors became so much better than before after this happened, and the scandals were decreased to a half than before accordingly. When the actors were fine, however the studio fell into a big serious crisis even worse than the actors' scandals. The Hollywood's opponent was neither other company nor the public, it was the government. Xie 9As the 1920's began, Hollywood began to realize that the cleaner movies they had formerly produced would no longer satisfy the people's thirst; as a result, they stopped producing such films as " Birth of Nation" which was a sort of documentary on the Ku Klux Klan, and went on produce films with more Sex and Violence. Producing films to the public with no principles and no morality, but just simply for economic benefits, it was right to adopt public's ideas, but please consider if it was adoptable first! Nevertheless, they still produced plenty of there kind of movies for people. One representative example of these movies was know " Thy Husband" with <https://assignbuster.com/the-golden-age-of-hollywood-film-studies-essay/>

the told the story of a young man who goes into the city for excitement and contracts, but a horrible disease that prevent him from marring or outside the law, a typical crime movie of the time. The people loved this kind of movies extremely, no matter how criminal or sexual it represented, but the worse thing is: the rise of the dirty movies had just begun. In this transition, Hollywood actually won the audiences' support; as an illustration, the movie attendance soared right after "The Devil", which featured a dangerous education, was published; furthermore, by the middle of the decade, 50 million people a week went to the movies—the equivalent of half the nation's population that caused the theaters had to rebuild to provide enough seats for people; for example, in Chicago, theater had enough seats for half the city's population to attend movie each day in 1925. It was an amazing news for Hollywood, which encouraged them to produce even more "dirty" movie; but in contrast, As a result, many parents, educators, civic organizations and religious groups pushed continuously for censorship, which is an organization to examine the movies, in the first half of the 20th century. The main concerns of these groups was the youth of that time wasXie 10so involved in films, conservatives feared that these youngsters might imitate values which they deemed immoral. As a result, the Hollywood movie industry was faced with the prospect of cleaning up their act. Seeing their need to act quickly, restore public confidence and avoid the government resuming control of censorship, Hollywood acted to police themselves by organizing theMotion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) with Will H. Hays as president. Hays had to do something about this, when he realized that Hollywood's reaction of this would never help it to stop producing dirty movies, it just to deceive the censorship simply, he must stop it by himself

as a president. Hays saw his task were not only stopped Hollywood making dirty movie, but also made them " mature enough to bear censure, conservative enough to value goodwill and shrewd enough to advocate middle class morals." It was obviously difficult, and it was a big challenge for him even his career; because he was a president, he had responsibility to set foot in this, besides he found the censorship could not control Hollywood anymore and Hollywood need to be discipline. However, his main objective was rejected by the censorship, because they thought they had controlled Hollywood already and the Hollywood had changed; after talked with censorship Hay's found changing the censorship was a dead end, so he came to convinced Hollywood; he said they would save a lot more money in the long run if they made clean movies, rather than having to pay to redo films after cuts were made by the Commission or losing money when a film was censored; but Hollywood rejected him too. For a large part of the 1920's, however, his methods were not producing a satisfactory solution for either Hollywood or the pro-censorship groups. Hays became veryXie 11depressed after these, no matter how had he tried, he could not change anything, but Hays would not be memorable if he stopped in that time. Hays realized that his gentle nudging of it would no longer satisfy these groups. Therefore, the Hays Office formulated a list of " Don'ts" and " Be Carefuls" which they promised Hollywood would obey. The " Don'ts" included the things which were totally forbade in movies, such as " Illegal drug traffic; inference of sexual perversion; ridicule of the clergy" (" Censorship in Hollywood" 4) and so on. The " Be Carefuls" were the things that could be used in the movies but not much, most of them were sensitive topic in that decade, such as " the use of flags; international relations; murder techniques; sympathy with

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criminals." (" Censorship in Hollywood" 4) This is a very notable list, it combine almost everything that appeared in the movies and divided them into 2 sides; it told movie industry the range explicitly, but the tone was not strong at the same time. So there was nothing that Hay's could still consider about this after publishing the list, but it was only his own thought.

Unfortunately, the movie industry hardly abided by these codes and most producers systematically found a way of getting around them; their main objective was to make money and to make money they had to make movies that would attract the most people, but the things on Hays' list were exactly what people wanted. It was clear that another change was necessary and it must be more powerful and effective. Gladly, in 1929 a new man named Martin Quigley came onto the scene, he had been acting as a matchmaker between Hollywood and the Catholic Church for a number of years so he saw the Hays' code's weakness and know how to convince the Hollywood in the most effective way. Therefore, he formulated his own Production CodeXie 12which had three main principles: " 1) No picture should lower the moral standards of those who see it. 2) Law, natural or divine, must not be belittled, ridiculed, nor must a sentiment be created against it. 3) As far as possible, life should not be misinterpreted, at least not in such a way as to place in the mind of youth false values on life." (Censorship in Hollywood" 6) With the publishing of this code, the Hays' code became useless and been abolished, Hays did not feel upset or get angry, in contrast, he was very pleased when he saw the new code, and gave it a very positive evaluation: " My eyes nearly popped out when I read it. This was the very thing I had been looking for." (" Censorship in Hollywood" 7) That is what a president should say, never consider about himself, it was true that his code was abolished,

instead of feeling upset about his work did not work out, he feel glad about the new code, which could really lead the whole movie industry to the right place. After Quigley read President's comment, he was so excited, that he quickly convinced the studios that this was the best and cheapest answer to their problems, the studios finally understood that this Code was purely voluntary, and they knew that if they did not abide by it this time they would face government censorship. It could be a disaster if this new code did not work either, there was 3 factors lead this code to the success; first, Quigley was really a very talented man with brave spirit, which helped him to create such as significant code in the Golden Age of Hollywood; Second, the Hays' support, if President Hays did not support Quigley's code, but objected to it, the Hollywood must still be a mess doubtless; Third, the Hollywood eventually realized it must stop producing dirty movie, because it had already caused some really awful influences to the whole society especially theXie13teenagers. Finally, as a result, the Production Code stayed in place and was reasonably effective for the more than 30 years until it was replaced by the rating system we have today. In conclusion, 1920 did worth the name of " The Golden Age of Hollywood" after all, it had given people so many surprise: the exciting moment that people watched the talkie movie in the first time; the tough progress that establishing the Hollywood sign; even though the duel between the Hollywood and the President Hays was notable, although it was negative, it was a logical thing during its development. Now, the Hollywood is getting even better than before with the modern technology and public's support, but there is still no reason we would ever forget the Hollywood in 1920s, a real prosperity of Hollywood. Xie 14