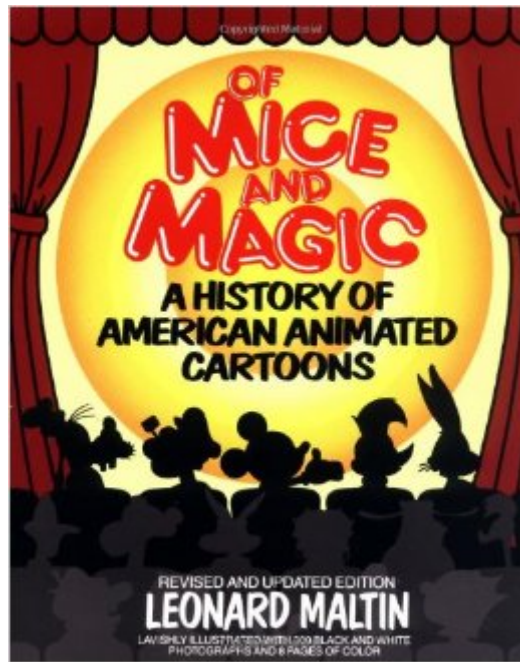


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Of Mice And Magic: A History Of American Animated Cartoons, Revised And Updated Edition



Synopsis

In this revised and updated edition of *Of Mice and Magic*, Leonard Maltin not only recreates this whole glorious era from the silent days through the Hollywood golden age to Spielberg's *An American Tail*, he traces the evolution of the art of animation and vividly portrays the key creative talents and their studios. This definitive history of American animated cartoons also brings Maltin's many fans up to date on the work being done today at the Walt Disney and Warner Bros. studios, and other developments in the world of animation. Drawing on colorful interviews with many of the American cartoon industry's principals, Maltin has come up with a gold mine of anecdotes and film history. Behind the scenes were genius animators and entrepreneurs such as Walt Disney, Chuck Jones, Tex Avery, Mel Blanc, and a legion of others. In all, Maltin has put together a glorious celebration of a universally loved segment of Americana. Includes the most extensive filmography on cartoons ever compiled, and sources for video rental.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When I think of the history of animation, I tend to divide things into three periods: The Golden Age, noted for early Warner Brothers cartoons and the classic Disney movies such as *Snow White* and *Fantasia*; The Age of Mediocrity, where creativity seemed to reach its nadir, as seen most notably in the bland Hanna Barbera cartoons; and the Modern Era, with the resurgence in cartoon creativity, which, starting with *The Little Mermaid* in the movies and the *Simpsons* on TV, animation reached a new level of popularity and respectability. Leonard Maltin's book, *Of Mice and Magic*, shows that my own view of cartoon history is roughly correct but also overly simple: there was plenty of mediocrity

in the Golden Age and plenty of decent stuff in the Age of Mediocrity. Maltin starts off with a chapter about the silent era, when animation was just beginning. Over time, experience would refine the process, but the big leap would occur with sound, in particular with Walt Disney's Steamboat Willie featuring Mickey Mouse. After the silent era chapter, there are chapters that serve as "biographies" of the major animation studios, starting with the biggest of them all, Disney. The Disney characters are among the most popular in cartoon history (or film history in general). Mickey Mouse may have been the biggest name, but he didn't have much of a personality, so he started being pushed aside in favor of more developed characters, especially Donald Duck, the first major Disney character with any sort of edge. In fact, this is a constant theme in the book: that the weakest cartoons from any studio were the ones that featured characters with no distinct personalities.

This is the book that turned me on to animated films. Well-known movie critic and buff Leonard Maltin wrote the third great book on American animated cartoons (the first two being "The Art of Walt Disney" and "Tex Avery: King of Cartoons"), and he gives us a look at all of the great cartoons of old, from Betty Boop and Koko the Clown through the eras of Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny, Mister Magoo, and even Fritz the Cat. His book is somewhat out of date now, as this book was published in 1985. Three years later, 1988 proved to be a watershed year in animation with the rebirth of Disney animation in "The Little Mermaid," while "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" made it okay for adults to enjoy cartoons. (Disney's "Duck Tales" also led the way to a new beginning of quality animation for TV, leaving the shoddy kiddie toy merchandising fodder in the dust...almost.) The years following these animation landmarks opened the gates to a flood of terrific cartoons that Maltin's book doesn't cover, including Spielberg's "Tiny Toons" and "Animaniacs;" Disney's "Toy Story;" the mainstream popularization of Japanese animation; quality children's cartoons with "Rugrats," "Bobby's World," and "Doug;" Warner Bros.' animated "Batman" and "Superman;" animation aimed at older audiences with "The Simpsons" and "South Park;" and so much more. The animation renaissance of the past dozen years or so has brought a new rebirth to the animation industry...and in fact, the definitive book on the new era of animation hasn't been written yet.

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