



# THE ARCHIVES THE ANIMATED MOVIES 1921-1968

**TASCHEN** 

# Walt's Arcadia: **The Silly Symphonies**

By Daniel Kothenschulte

In the history of cinema, it took 15 years from Dwarfs, the feature-length landmark. The the short moving pictures of the Lumière time between is considered the coming-of-

brothers in 1895 for the feature film to es- age of an art form. More than the Mickey tablish itself. This progression was repeated Mouse series, which was the cornerstance in Walt Disney's early career in animation. of Disney's worldwide success, the 75 short Sixteen years lie between his first short, the cartoons in the Silly Symphonies series are still sparsely animated Laugh-O-arams, and the benchmark of this process of artistic and the premiere of Snow White and the Seven technical perfection. And yet it would be

an understatement to merely admire them as milestones along the way to later masterpieces.

Just as we see early silent film history today as far more than just the infancy. of cinema, but rather as a time of inexhaustible fantasy and variety, never to be repeated again, the Silly Symphonies

were Walt Disney's arcadia.

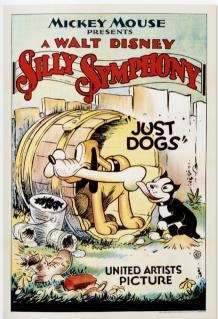
Disney selected Wilfred Jackson, Burt Gillett, Dave Hand, and Ben Sharpsteen to direct them and enlisted some of America's best animators-Norman Ferguson, Fred Moore, Dick Lundy, and Albert Hurter whom he eventually appointed as the first inspirational artist.





4.01 An all-purpose Silly Symphony poster from 1934, highlighting characters from some of the most popular releases. 4.02-03 In these story sketches for

Ferdinand the Bull (1938), the matador, a caricature of Walt Disney. tries - without success - to rouse Ferdinand's fighting spirit. 4.04 Pluto, a regular cast member in the Mickey Mouse series, was also featured in two Silly Symphonies. Just Dogs (1932) was the first.



honies (1929-1939



6.12 The Blue Fairy works her magic on Pinocchio in this watercolor by Gustaf Tenggren.



huge screen above the stage. Visualized daring an enterprise as often assumed. music has found its place in major con- Abstract films had been popular with socert halls all over the world, not least be-phisticated audiences since the mid '30s. cause of the legacy of a film that in its early In 1944, Disney mentioned that even before stages of development was simply titled Fantasia, consideration had been given to an "Concert Feature." abstract movie and listed several influences:

# "Fantasia" — Piece by Piece

Disney's decision to accompany Bach's enthusiastically received program of films "Toccata and Fugue in D Minor" with ab- by the German filmmaker Oskar Fischinger

7.20 A story sketch for "The Sorcerer's Apprentice." The short became so expensive that it was decided to make it part of a "Concert Feature." 7.21 An illustrated animation draft listing the animators assigned to every single shot of "The Sorcerer's Apprentice."

the combination of color and movement in the handmade film A Colour Box (UK, 1935) by the New Zealander Len Lve. as well as an stract images might not be considered as at the Disney studio, who was given a contract at Disney to work as an effects animator. As Disney explained, the idea of an abstract movie was "an outgrowth of our Effects Department, which we organized long before we had any contact with Stokowski. The idea of color and music is very old. The color organ is really the key to it all and that goes Page No. RX-1 Page THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE DRAFT NO. L. PAGE NO. 6 Seq. TITLE Dies Pictur Dave 12-30-37 Descree Jim Alger ASST. DIE. Jim Baumeister LAYOUT MAN Zack Schwartz Secv & other MULTIPLANS WATER SEX HINEN he twice - Cut ESAME BACKEDUNG-NEW PAINTING MIRODUCE WENT COLOR brooms scurry in - trample him - pan camera slightly - Cut to: C.U. MICKEY'S HEAD - BROOMS TRAMPLING on him. Cut to: LRED VIOLET M.S. LEADER BROOKS FROM OFFOSITE ANGLE stepping off bottom step - surging



"That's my man. Any man who could slide from Rothschild to Rax is the man for me."

EL ONLY PL A MINUTE-



"It wasn't until we'd done about three or four of these (Goofy shorts) that [John McLeish] knew I was pulling his leg. By that time, he didn't mind. He was a star in his own right."

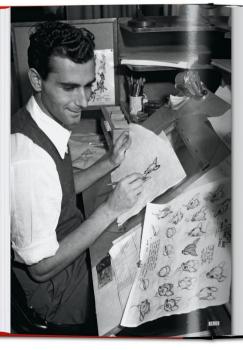
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9.11 Third rote: Larry Clemmons, Ted Sears, unknown, Bill Cottrell; middle rote: Hamilton Luske, Walt, Robert Benchley, Buddy Pepper; front rote: Erdman Penner, Lance Nolley.

9.12 Animation drawing of the Dragon, who, sud Robin Allan, "resembles Oscar Wilde in shape if not in wit." 9.18-14 Two story sketches by I. Hee, 9.15 Reluctant Dragon model sheet by Disney's first "concept artist," Albert Hurler.

.12



boost multiple styles of its own. Now, with the for that transformed Bambl. advent of Wong's sophisticated simplicity, Bambi found its unique "look." Layout and Character Design background artists followed Wong's lead, and Animation crafting refined settings that evoked the attumn.

## "You have hit the spirit of the story with this. This is Bambi, There is no gag that stands out above Bambi himself."

Sidney Franklin

Veteran artists later pointed out that paint- passing but would be featured at the foreing all the film's backgrounds in

an elaborate style, each leaf and twia rendered in painstakina detail, would have taken so long that the entire production would be delayed. Too, such ornate backgrounds would invite technical problems: the animated characters, intended as the focal point of a scene, would be less effective when placed against cluttered, "busy" backgrounds. Now with simplified, understated settings. both those problems were eliminated. From both an aesthetic and a practical standpoint, Tyrus Wong's

11.13 Art Elliott consults a model sheet as he animates the young Bambi. 11.14-17 These animation roughs by Milt Kahl, for a scene later out from the film. show how the principles of animal anatomy were adapted to animation.

Fantasia, with its separate sections, could distinctive pictorial approach was a key fac-

mosphere of Bambi's world: the breathless Of all aspects of production, by far the most bush before a rain shower the lush greens of technically difficult was the animation of the summer the bittersweet melancholy of au- leading characters. Disney artists had animated deer and other hooved creatures in Snow White and other films, with perfectly acceptable results. Those deer had generally appeared in supporting roles, and their tovlike appearance was appropriate to the storybook world of a film like Snow White. As we have seen, however Rambi was set in an entirely different animated universe, one based What made this development doubly brilliant on the authentic world of nature. Moreover, was that it also worked on a practical level, these deer would not simply be alimpsed in









11.16

11.17