

In Step with History: The Evolution of Disney Animation

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The Walt Disney Company has made dreams come true to billions of people throughout the course of history. From family movie night to a vacation across the world, Disney can be found everywhere. If someone was to think about their favorite films growing up, chances are at least one Disney animated film would come to mind. With films like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Aladdin* or even *Frozen*, Walt Disney and his studio has been creating timeless classics since seemingly the beginning of time. Disney films evolved with the world to stay relevant and remain the focus of families all over the world. The evolution of Walt Disney Animation runs parallel to modern history, as the studio repeatedly adapts to cultural and technological shifts by experimenting with ways to collapse the boundary between animation and reality. So, join me as we dive into the history of Walt Disney Animation, shall you?

Our journey begins before the first film was ever made. Walt Disney grew up in the small town of Marceline, Missouri. During his early years, he “became interested in drawing” and “sold [his] first sketches to neighbors when [he] was only seven years old” (Le, 2015, 1:32-1:40). Drawing and creating stories was in Walt’s blood. The Disney family moved to Kansas City, where Walt started to follow his dream by creating Laugh-O-Gram Studio. This studio proved to be an ultimate failure, but set the groundwork for what was to come. Laugh-O-Gram Studio taught Walt to think about the business aspects of his creative endeavors so he could make ends meet. Fortunately, the failure of this first studio did not sway Walt from his dreams.

After Laugh-O-Gram Studio became a relic of the past, things got interesting when he moved out to California. One day, a young Walt Disney sat down and began to draw. He started with a circle, then another, adding limbs, hands and a pair of unmistakable ears. He continued sketching until the simple shapes became something more. When he finished, he had created an icon.

That icon was Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. I bet you were thinking of somebody else.

Universal Pictures commissioned Walt and his creative partner, Ub Iwerks, to create short films with the original character Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. Even though the duo “only completed 26 Oswald shorts for Universal Pictures, the character would become incredibly important to [Walt]” as his first big creative outlet and a spring board for future ideas (Taylor, 2020). Oswald’s debut came via the animated short *Trolley Troubles* which was released in 1927. The six minute short showed Oswald working as a trolley conductor where things go awry after Oswald loads too many people on the trolley (Disney, 1927). This was naturally a huge success and allowed “Walt and his brother and business partner Roy [to] hire more animators” (Taylor, 2020). Walt and the Universal producer Charles Mintz had numerous creative differences when it came to the character and eventually, Mintz had enough. Under Walt’s nose, Mintz stole animators and signed a deal that took ownership of Oswald away from Disney and gave sole custody to Universal (Taylor, 2020). So angered by this, without a star character, Walt went back to the drawing board.

One day, a young Walt Disney sat down and began to draw again. He started with a circle, then another, adding limbs, hands and a pair of unmistakable ears. He continued sketching until the simple shapes became something more. When he finished, he had created an icon. That icon was Mortimer Mouse, who was later renamed Mickey due to the request of Walt’s wife, Lillian (Dapcevich, 2024). Mickey first appeared in the animated short *Steamboat Willie*. This eight minute short follows Mickey as the pilot of a steamboat, until he is demoted by the captain Pete and ends up getting into all sorts of trouble as a deckhand (Disney, 1928). This was naturally a huge success, and now the three-circled icon can be seen literally anywhere you go. Walt grew off of Mickey’s popularity by both creating more shorts and loaning Mickey to other

studios, such as Fox and MGM where the full creative control and final approval for the mouse's usage remains entirely up to Walt (Kaufman, 1993).

The next natural step to follow the success of Mickey Mouse is to create more lovable characters that general audiences will want to spend money to go watch. Out of this, we get what is commonly referred to as the “Sensational Six” — the lifeblood of the Walt Disney Company. The first one, as previously talked about, is the big cheese, Mickey Mouse himself. Introduced with Mickey in the *Steamboat Willie* short was “Minerva Mouse, but Mickey nervously calls her Minnie” within the short, and that nickname stuck around (Jim, 2014). Our third main mascot is Pluto, who was introduced as a true pet dog to Mickey, unlike the next character Dippy Dawg. Despite the alliteration, Dippy Dawg is such a dumb name that Walt renamed him to Goofy after his goofy disposition (Jim, 2014). At around this time, the early 1930s, Mickey had become the type of character who was stuck being a model citizen and could not get angry or have temper tantrums. That is where Donald Duck's famous temper comes from, as he was created for that very reason. Finally, in the short *Mr. Duck Steps Out*, Donald meets “and shyly introduces himself to Daisy Duck” who “becomes Minnie's best friend” and Donald's romantic partner, rounding out the Sensational Six (Jim, 2014). While all of the shorts featuring these characters were very successful, Walt set his eyes on bigger and better things. Walt Disney Productions turned its focus to feature length films.

The animated Disney catalog is commonly split into different eras, and the first one is known as “The Golden Age.” This set of films is labeled golden “because it marked a major step for the company and for the world” (*A Quick*, 2020). Most people had never seen animations of this scale before, and so people were flocking from all over to get their eyes on them. The first film was *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which loosely follows the fairytale where Snow

White has an evil stepmother, runs away and finds the dwarfs, gets tracked down by her stepmother in disguise and gets cursed to an eternal sleep, only to be awakened by true love and live happily ever after (Hand, 1937). The next is *Pinocchio*, which is the classic story about a boy made of wood who wants to be a real boy (Sharpsteen, 1940). Then came *Fantasia*, which showcases multiple classical music pieces that the Disney animators used as the base for their animations (Armstrong, 1940). *Dumbo* showcases Dumbo the Flying Elephant as he learns that his big-eared quirk is nothing to think less of him for (Sharpsteen, 1941). *Bambi* rounded the era out, a film about a baby deer growing up and being raised by a buck after his mom is shot and killed on a hunting trip (Hand, 1942).

Out of all of these films, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* made history and really earned the “golden era” name for this time period. This film made history as the first ever feature length animated film. This was a bet-the-farm style bet by Walt and the company because of Walt’s “aesthetic interest in the newly developed possibilities of the art form” (Inge, 2004). This bet paid off, as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is “admired as a piece of cinematic art, a miraculous bringing together of collaborative talents under the guiding intelligence of a creative genius” (Inge, 2004).

Speaking of the company, shortly before *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was created, Walt and his brother decided to officially make The Walt Disney Company, originally named Walt Disney Productions. Roy was the first CEO of the company while Walt was the creative head of the company. Notably, Walt was not the CEO, because Walt was always in charge of the creative decisions and Roy was in charge of everything business-related (Scott, 2024, 5:46-5:53).

Outside of the newly formed Disney bubble, tensions throughout the world were heating up. The president throughout the entire Golden Era was Franklin D. Roosevelt (*Presidents of the*

United, n.d.). The reason that *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was a huge risk is because the entire world was going through the Great Depression. The Great Depression was a “worldwide economic downturn that began in 1929 and lasted until about 1939,” two years after *Snow White* was released (Romer, n.d.). After the Great Depression another worldwide event arose, World War II. At the start of the war, the United States elected to stay neutral, as there wasn’t any reason for them to get involved. The United States continued to stay neutral until “President Franklin Roosevelt kept getting more disheartening news about the devastation wreaked by the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor” (Burtness & Ober, 2017, p. 91). Obviously outraged by another country touching our boats, the United States had no other choice than to enter the war, which directly impacts the next Disney era.

The Wartime Era “was a challenging time for the studio, as many of its workers had left to go to war and budgets were cut, so Walt didn’t have very many options” when creating new films for families to enjoy during this trying time (*A Quick*, 2020). Every film in this era is an anthology, as Disney was only able to scrap together multiple short films instead of churning out fleshed out, feature-length animation. The first film in this era, *Saludos Amigos*, shows the Disney animators exploring Latin America through various segments (Ferguson, 1943). *The Three Caballeros* also explores Latin America by blending live action and animation (Ferguson, 1945). Next, *Make Mine Music* has animated shorts that are set to popular music from the time (Kinney, 1946). *Fun and Fancy Free* mashes two short stories together, featuring a retelling of the famous fairytale Jack and the Beanstalk with Mickey Mouse (Kinney, 1947). *Melody Time* is another music-centered anthology inspired by American folk songs and legends (Geronimi, 1948). To round out this era, *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* has two stories; one

follows Mr. Toad and his drinking problem and another one follows Ichabod Crane and the headless horseman (Kinney, 1949).

The United States Government also got directly involved with Disney media during the Wartime Era. “Soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Treasury Department had enlisted Disney to create a [propaganda] cartoon starring Donald Duck,” with an emphasis on educating the public as to what taxes were and why they were important to pay (Donald Duck, 1982, p. 46). This propaganda cartoon was called *The New Spirit*, and showed Donald being super patriotic and filing his taxes so the United States has the funds to fight in World War II (Jackson, 1942). Following this, Disney made two more propaganda films. First another Donald Duck short was created called *Der Fuehrer's Face* where Donald Duck is a worker for Nazi Germany and features an insane quote where Donald says “Hail Hitler” over and over again (Kinney, 1943). Finally, the studio created *Victory Through Air Power* which educates Americans about how the United States is going to win World War II and features a mix of live action and animated segments (Algar, 1943).

The Wartime Era sparked a new goal for the Walt Disney Company that gets revisited within numerous films from this point on. Walt strived to merge animation with live human acting in a way that was seamless and nobody would question. This first started with *Victory Through Air Power*, with animated segments that were narrated by Art Baker (Algar, 1943). The next crack put animated characters alongside live humans. This feat was achieved in *The Three Caballeros* where Donald, Panchito and José were put into pre-recorded dance sequences (Ferguson, 1945). Finally within this era, Disney attempted to merge animation and live action with the highly controversial film, *Song of the South*. In this film the character Uncle Remus, who is a slave, stars alongside animated characters within the “Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah” song

sequence (Foster & Jackson, 1946). Uncle Remus also has a direct conversation with one of the animated characters, Brer Rabbit, which set history as one of the first times a cartoon shared the screen with a human and had a conversation (Foster & Jackson, 1946).

In the midst of war, Harry Truman became the president of the United States (*Presidents of the United*, n.d.). These unlikely allies fought together until the eventual end of the war where a surrender ceremony took place on September 2, 1945, during which Germany and the Axis Powers surrendered (*The End of World*, n.d.). The war allowed the United States and Soviet Union to learn about each other's military power, and neither party liked what they saw. This brought about the Cold War, as if these two actually went to war, the result would be the end of the world. The intelligence agencies of the United States, like the CIA, spied on the Soviet Union whereas the Soviet Union did the same on the United States. Due to the Cold War, “strong anti-communist sentiment in the United States caused mistrust in anyone associated with a Communist Party” (Riehle, 2019, p. 361). The paranoia brought about by anyone being a communist brought about a strong sense of patriotism throughout the country. This rise of authentic Americanism throughout the country allowed the Walt Disney Company to return to the form they first got popular with.

The Silver Era of Walt Disney Animation “was the mark of a huge turnaround for the company,” as they were finally able to shake off the box office failures that happened at the end of the Golden and throughout the Wartime Era (*A Quick*, 2020). The first of these original formula films is *Cinderella*, following the fairytale about Cinderella’s magical night away from her evil stepmother and stepsisters which ends up resulting in her happily ever after (Jackson, 1950). This was immediately followed by *Alice in Wonderland*, a fever dream where Alice goes to the weird and wacky world of Wonderland (Geronimi, 1951). We then flew off to Neverland,

where *Peter Pan* follows the Darling children, who do not want to grow up, and meet Peter, who takes them on a big journey through the second star to the right (Luske, 1953). A couple years later, audiences were treated to *Lady and the Tramp*, a film about two dogs who fall in love over spaghetti and meatballs (Luske, 1955). *Sleeping Beauty* shows the tale of Aurora, who is cursed to an eternal sleep by Maleficent and can only be awakened by true love's kiss (Geronimi, 1959). Another film for dog lovers released after that, as *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* show the Dalmatians Pongo and Perdita trying to rescue their dogs from being kidnapped by Cruella de Vil (Reitherman, 1961). The next film is *The Sword in the Stone*, which shows how King Arthur became King Arthur by pulling out a sword from a stone (Reitherman, 1963). Finally, *The Jungle Book* shows the story of Mowgli as he is taken in by a group of jungle animals and eventually returned to the "man village" at the end of the film (Reitherman, 1967).

While Disney Animation was having its most profitable era yet, the company was also making strides in other ventures. "In 1955, Disneyland would officially open in Anaheim, California, ushering in a new chapter in the world of Disney experiences" (*Disney History*, 2023). This revolutionary concept in storytelling brought Disney films to life in such a way that families from all around the country could meet their favorite characters in person. Making a park that "is dedicated to the ideals, the dreams, and the hard facts that have created America with the hope that it will be a source of joy and inspiration to all the world" set a new standard in the theme park industry (Iwerks, 2026, 1:09:58-1:10:09). Disneyland solidified "Disney's legacy as a cultural touchstone" (*Disney History*, 2023).

During this era, Disney also continued to merge human acting with animation through the well-known film *Mary Poppins*. This film follows the titular character as she starts nannying the Banks children and magic ensues all along the way (Stevenson, 1964). What makes the inclusion

of animation interesting here is that P. L. Travers, the author of the original *Mary Poppins* novel, was completely against any use of animation in the film. She even said, “you promised me that this film would not be an animation” (Hancock, 2013, 1:31:52-1:31:57). But Walt Disney did it anyway, because there is rarely anything that stands in the way of him and what he wants.

Looking at the success of Disneyland, Walt had the idea to bring Disneyland to the east coast, however that was an entirely different audience that might not receive a theme park the same way the west coast did. Luckily, Disney found a way to test the east coast theme park market. The 1964 New York World’s Fair partnered with the Walt Disney Company to bring some attractions to the fair. Walt agreed because this allowed him and his “Imagineers” at WED Enterprises to test new creative ideas while other corporate sponsors foot the bill.

Through the World’s Fair, Disney was able to create four attractions which can still be found in the theme parks today. All four of these attractions included a new type of three-dimensional animation through a technology called audio-animatronics. These functionally are programmed robots that replace human actors because Disney “can’t afford to pay ‘em, or they’ll make mistakes, or somebody won’t show up” (Defunctland, 2020, 19:07-19:11). The first attraction was Ford’s Magic Skyway, which is “a diorama of prehistoric days” (Luske, 1964, 17:58-18:01). Guests would get into their Ford branded car and glide along the roads of the past. Ford did not want to pay for the attraction to be relocated to Disneyland after the fair ended, so Disney uprooted the dinosaur animatronics and put them on a leg of the Disneyland Railroad.

Disney’s next attraction, sponsored by Pepsi-Cola, was “it’s a small world” which took guests on a boat ride around the world. This attraction housed the secret entrance to the city of Tomorrowland, which you can see in the film of the same name (Bird, 2015, 8:50-9:35). More notably, it was “a salute to UNICEF and children everywhere” by promoting global unity and

peace on Earth (Bird, 2015, 7:55-7:58). The attraction was moved to Disneyland post-fair, and now has versions of it in Disney Parks around the world.

In the Progressland pavilion, visitors of the fair can find the Carousel of Progress. The Carousel of Progress follows an animatronic family through time starting at the turn of the 20th century, and showcases all of the technological updates, particularly by their sponsor General Electric, as time goes on (Luske, 1964, 27:30-28:14). The Carousel of Progress also has a mini social commentary on “the impact of feminism and the widening role of women” however she is still shown doing mostly stuff around the house like cleaning the oven and taking laundry off the line, as was customary at the time (Weiner, 1997, p. 114). This attraction moved from the fair to Disneyland, then to Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World, and its preshow “will be updated with an animatronic figure of Walt Disney” this year (Zaharchuk, 2025).

Finally, the fair included a show called “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln,” sponsored by the State of Illinois. This show featured an animatronic Abraham Lincoln sharing excerpts from different speeches. The broken animatronic only successfully performed seven times on the attraction's opening day of April 30th, 1964 (Defunctland, 2020, 34:48-34:56). After the fair, the show moved to Main Street U.S.A. at Disneyland and has been continuously reanimating the deceased president ever since. Walt saw the 1964 New York’s World Fair as a complete success, and was ready to start planning his east coast park.

Walt Disney passed away on December 15th, 1966. It is important to note “that Disney was a smoker for the vast majority of his adult life” and during this he contracted lung cancer (Delpozo, 2023). He was also under immense stress due to the production of *The Jungle Book*, which released on October 18th, 1967, and what at the time was referred to as the “Florida Project,” which ended up being Walt Disney World. Unfortunately, “on the morning of

December 15, 1966, Walt Disney passed away due to ‘circulatory collapse’ caused by the cancer that had ravaged his body” (Delpozo, 2023). Following the death of his brother Walt, Roy O. Disney continued to be the CEO of the Walt Disney Company, continuing plans for feature films and his late brother’s dream of a bigger and better Disneyland on the east coast.

During the Silver Era, the country faced a gigantic civil rights movement. During this movement, *Brown v. Board of Education* decided that “separating children in public schools on the basis of race was unconstitutional” (*Brown v. Board*, n.d.). Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves after the Civil War and Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his powerful, yet iconic “I have a dream” speech to further protest segregation.

This brings us back to Disney and the start of the Bronze Era. This timeframe is known as “one of the least popular eras as the company once again went downhill with Walt’s passing,” but nonetheless still had a few standouts (*A Quick*, 2020). *The Aristocats* follows a group of aristocratic cats as a common alley cat helps them find their way home (Reitherman, 1970). Next, *Robin Hood* follows the classic fairytale in an animal-filled medieval world (Reitherman, 1973). The anthology *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* stitches together many shorts into one continuous story (Reitherman, 1977). *The Rescuers* have us go along with a couple mice and they adventure to rescue a girl who was kidnapped (Reitherman, 1977). Disney then shows us the unlikely friendship between *The Fox and the Hound* as the hound’s owner tasks him with hunting the fox (Stevens, 1981). *The Black Cauldron* follows Taran on a quest to prevent an evil king from obtaining a magical cauldron (Berman, 1985). *The Great Mouse Detective* follows a basic private investigator plot as he tries to solve the mystery against the mouse monarchy (Musker, 1986). Finally, *Oliver & Company* follows Oliver the homeless kitten after he joins a pack of street dogs in a unique retelling of *Oliver Twist* (Scribner, 1988).

The Walt Disney Company was trying to stabilize the uneasiness brought about by Walt's passing. One of the attempts to do so is by continuing to merge human acting with animation. *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* followed a witch during World War II, tasked with housing children to keep them safe, and features an entire sequence where the live action characters were in a fully animated world (Stevenson, 1971). A few years later, Disney released *Pete's Dragon*, which followed Pete as he tried to assimilate with a normal society but always found himself in trouble because of his fully-animated pet dragon (Chaffey, 1977). A little over a decade later, the ideas in these two films merged together with the release of the cult classic *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. This film followed the animated Roger Rabbit with the human private investigator Eddie Valiant, handcuffed together, as they search to uncover the truth to who really killed Marvin Acme, the founder of Toontown (Zemeckis, 1988). This film has humans in a completely animated world and animations in a completely human world, doing the biggest crossover event of the time by having Mickey Mouse share a screen with Bugs Bunny and Donald Duck share a screen with Daffy Duck. Safe to say: Disney reached their goals.

The Walt Disney Company also expanded their theme park portfolio. Picking up where Walt left off, "Walt Disney World officially opened on October 1, 1971, near Orlando, Florida" with its flagship park, the Magic Kingdom (*Disney History*, 2023). The "Florida Project" only grew from there until the resort has more than 25 hotels for guests to stay at. Additionally, the parks of Epcot, Hollywood Studios (formerly MGM Studios) and Animal Kingdom were also built so Disney's unique storytelling can be brought to life. Disney theme parks also went global during this era. "Tokyo Disneyland opened in 1983, marking Disney's first international theme park" (*Disney History*, 2023). Partnering with the Oriental Land Company, Disney Imagineers were able to be more creative than ever, while Japan paid for it all. Tokyo Disneyland is known

for having the most top tier attractions anywhere in the world, as well as being a time capsule for fans of attractions like Splash Mountain and the original versions of Pirates of the Caribbean and Roger Rabbit's Car Toon Spin, as Tokyo Disneyland did not adopt the changes Disney made to their American counterparts.

With all this success in goals created by the company's founder, one aspect of the company seemed to be changing all of the time. Longtime CEO, Roy O. Disney retired from his position in 1971 following the opening of the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World (The Direct, 2026). Roy was succeeded by Donn Tatum, who was insurmountable during the process of realizing Walt's dream of the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow, or Epcot, as well as the early development of Tokyo Disneyland (The Direct, 2026). In 1976, Donn Tatum retired as CEO and was succeeded by Card Walker, who held the title until 1983 (The Direct, 2026). The CEO position was taken over by Ron W. Miller, Walt's son-in-law (The Direct, 2026). Ron held the title for only a year — the shortest length in company history — and was replaced by Michael Eisner in 1984, finally providing the company with leadership stability (The Direct, 2026).

While Disney was undergoing tons of leadership change during the Bronze Era, so was the United States. Richard Nixon became the president of the United States in 1969 (*Presidents of the United*, n.d.). Nixon's presidency was going super well until he resigned from office while facing impeachment due to this little thing called Watergate. "Three decades after his resignation as president, Richard Nixon continues to fascinate his old enemies in the news media" (Feldstein, 2004, p. 207). The scandal left Nixon "perceived [by journalists] as a flickering shadow, not a flesh and blood person" and changed the way that the citizens of the United States sees and thinks about their leaders (Feldstein, 2004, p. 207). Nixon was replaced in 1974 by Gerald R.

Ford (*Presidents of the United*, n.d.). Ford was replaced by Jimmy Carter in 1977 who was replaced in 1981 by Ronald Reagan (*Presidents of the United*, n.d.).

Now that both the country and the Walt Disney Company have stabilized with their leaders, Disney Animation hit the Disney Renaissance. The Disney Renaissance is regarded as “one of the most popular and most loved era’s, even to this day” (*A Quick*, 2020). This is proven by two of my top three Disney films coming from this era. The era begins with *The Little Mermaid* which is a story about the mermaid Ariel who longs to be part of the human world and goes to great lengths to see that dream become reality (Musker, 1989). Next is *The Rescuers Down Under*, which returns to our brave mice as this time they travel to Australia to save a boy who is being held captive (Butoy, 1990). *Beauty and the Beast* is next, following Belle as she travels to a castle filled with a beast and anthropomorphic objects, inevitably falling in love with the beast which saves him from a curse (Trousdale, 1991). *Aladdin* takes us to Arabian nights as the titular street rat teams up with a genie to impress and eventually marry Princess Jasmine (Musker, 1992). *The Lion King* follows future king Simba as he gets blamed for the death of his father Mufasa and then returns to the Pride Lands to take the throne from his uncle Scar who actually killed Mufasa (Allers, 1994). *Pocahontas* shows the invasion of the United States by forces from Europe and how John Smith came to understand the Native Americans (Gabriel, 1995). Next, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* follows the “deformed and ugly” Quasimodo (Trousdale, 1996, 12:46-12:51). In contrast, *Hercules* follows the very strong and good looking Hercules as he tries to ascend back into being an immortal (Musker, 1997). Audiences are then taken to China as Mulan, a woman, takes the place of her old father, a man, in a war (Cook, 1998). To end the era, *Tarzan* shows the titular character being adopted and raised by jungle creatures after his parents died, but then he comes across Jane, a stranger like him (Lima, 1999).

Not only was this era of the Disney Animation catalog regarded as the best in Disney history, it also set history. *The Rescuers Down Under* was the first film in the official Disney animated line to be a sequel. From this point on, every sequel to a Disney movie would be released through the subsidiary, Disneytoon Studios, until *Ralph Breaks the Internet* released in 2018. The international Disney Parks expanded, with Disneyland Paris opened in 1992 (*Disney History*, 2023). Disney storytelling also went on a new venture, New York City. The Disney Theatrical Group was formed and the very first production, “Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast* opened at the Palace Theatre in New York in 1994” (*Celebrating 30 Years*, 2024).

Since this overwhelming success, Broadway has seen numerous Disney productions, including “productions such as *The Lion King*, *Aladdin*, and *Frozen*” which give the timeless classics a new medium to be enjoyed (*Celebrating 30 Years*, 2024). During the historical Disney Renaissance, Disney also produced their very first live-action remake of an animated film. This came in the form of the 1996 film, *101 Dalmatians*. This adaptation closely follows the plot of the original, while keeping the storytelling more grounded by taking out things such as talking animals (Herek, 1996).

Disney then enters the Post-Renaissance Era. At this point, “you can see there’s a pattern with the company,” when you have a huge highpoint like the Golden Era, Silver Era, and the Renaissance, there will be a lowpoint such as the Wartime Era, Bronze Era, and now the Post-Renaissance Era (*A Quick*, 2020). *Fantasia 2000*, which came out in 1999, is an updated version of the original film using new music and new animations (Hahn, 1999). *Dinosaur* treated audiences to Disney’s first attempt at animation using computer graphics (Zondag, 2000). *The Emperor’s New Groove* followed Kuzco and Pacha on their trek back to the castle where Yzma and her henchman Kronk took over the throne (Dindal, 2000). *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* has

Milo and a crew of misfits search the oceans for the lost city of Atlantis (Trousdale, 2001). *Lilo & Stitch* creates chaos in paradise as the titular alien lands in Hawaii with the prime directive to cause chaos and destroy all in sight (Sanders, 2002). *Treasure Planet* tells the classical tale of *Treasure Island*, with a futuristic twist (Musker, 2002). *Brother Bear* follows Kenai as he is magically turned into a bear and needs to learn how to respect nature (Blaise, 2003). *Home on the Range* shows cows fighting against a cowboy who steals cows (Finn, 2004). *Chicken Little* has the very anxious titular character navigate an alien invasion (Dindal, 2005). Finally, *Meet the Robinsons* teaches Lewis Robinson optimism and to keep moving forward when he is taken to the future (Anderson, 2007).

This era was a big time of expansion for the Walt Disney Company. In 2004, Disney bought the Muppets. Before his passing, “Jim Henson pursued extensive discussions with The Walt Disney Company based on his strong belief that Disney would be a perfect home for the Muppets” (*The Walt*, 2004). This sentiment is proven by the final project Jim Henson worked on, *Muppet*Vision 3D*. This film made specifically for the Disney Parks attraction showcases Dr. Bunsen Honeydew’s invention of recording the Muppets in 3D, which caused all sorts of chaos that the ensemble needed to solve and control (Henson, 1991). Speaking of the parks, Hong Kong Disneyland opened in 2005 (*Disney History*, 2023). In that same year, Michael Eisner stepped down as CEO and the role was given to Bob Iger (The Direct, 2026).

Iger’s first act as CEO was to purchase the Pixar Animation Studio run by Steve Jobs. Prior to the acquisition, Disney “entered into a feature film agreement with Pixar [back] in 1991” (*Disney to Acquire*, 2006). This agreement was how Pixar was able to release *Toy Story*, a film about toys who are alive and have feelings (Lasseter, 1995). “In 1997, Disney extended its relationship with Pixar by entering into a co-production agreement” (*Disney to Acquire*, 2006).

The final film released under this agreement before Disney took full control was *Cars*, which follows rookie racing sensation Lightning McQueen as he learns the importance of not being selfish or arrogant in a world where cars are alive and have feelings (Lasseter, 2006). The acquisition of Pixar allowed Disney to put the Pixar intellectual property into their parks, such as a full scale replica of Radiator Springs from *Cars* in Disney California Adventure Park at Disneyland Resort. Pixar is still going strong, just having released the film *Hoppers* which follows Mabel as she tries to save a forest glade from being destroyed to build a freeway (Chong, 2026). Later this year, the studio will also release *Toy Story 5*, which will provide a commentary on how technology is taking over the role that was once owned by toys (Stanton, 2026).

Iger was moving fast to gain the favor of Disney fans, as he next pulled a move to preserve the history of the company. Remember Oswald the Lucky Rabbit? If you don't, Walt and Ub Iwerks "completed 26 Oswald shorts for Universal Pictures" (Taylor, 2020). When Walt and the Universal producer Charles Mintz had a disagreement, Mintz took Oswald away from Disney and locked him away deep within Universal history. ABC, owned by Disney, had a bunch of sports commentators move to NBC, owned by Universal. The exception of this was well-known sportscaster Al Michaels, who was still under an ABC contract. Like a trade in the NFL, "Bob Iger crafted an agreement with NBCUniversal" which "traded the contract of sportscaster Al Michaels to NBC for the rights to the character," bringing Oswald the Lucky Rabbit back home to Disney (*How Oswald*, 2023).

The Walt Disney Company also gave another attempt at merging human acting and animation through the film *Enchanted*. This film explored the concept differently than any film before it. Instead of having animated characters in the "real world" or humans in an animated one, *Enchanted* takes animated characters and puts them into the real world, morphing them into

human actors along the way. In this film, we follow Giselle who was going to get married in her animated world until Queen Narissa tries to kill her but actually sends her to New York where she meets Robert Phillip and falls in love (Lima, 2007). There is an interesting love square that explores animated-to-human romantic relationships. Giselle, who started as an animated character, falls in love with the live-action Robert Phillip, where the originally animated Prince Edward falls in love with Robert's human girlfriend, Nancy Tremaine (Lima, 2007). This specific film brings merging animated and human characters to a new high, they are the same and look the same depending on what world they find themselves in.

While Disney reached the peak at merging real life and animation, nobody could have guessed how widespread the World Wide Web would become. Society is dependent on using computers to make their lives easier, however that almost brought about the end of the world. When logging dates, computers use the last two numbers in a given year. For example, "1999" would be logged as "99." The technology community did not know how computers would register "2000" or "00." "Would "00" be translated as 0000, 1000, 1900, or 2000?" (Y2K, n.d.). People not knowing the answer to this question caused widespread fear that "affected computer systems, unsure of the year, would fail to operate and cause massive power outages, transportation systems to shut down, and banks to close," causing the end of the world (Y2K, n.d.). As the clock was counting down to Y2K, everyone was holding their breath. The clock struck midnight, some companies experienced minor issues, "but no major end-of-the-world events or significant issues occurred at 12:00 AM on January 1, 2000" (Y2K, n.d.).

George W. Bush became the president of the United States in 2001 (*Presidents of the United*, n.d.). Later that year, tragedy struck the United States as the World Trade Center was attacked on September 11, 2001. This event shook not only the country, but the world. Everyone

came together to never forget what took place on that day. The events of 9/11 affected the Disney film *Lilo & Stitch*. There is a scene that includes a spaceship chase through the Hawaiian mountains, however it was originally supposed to include a chase through a city center that looked like it could have been New York City (Sanders, 2002, 1:09:53-1:10:04). Not only was the sequence in a highly-populated city, but instead of being on Jumba's ship, the gang was on a 747 airliner (Vox, 2017).

With the internet fastly growing, strides were made to put the internet into your pocket so it can be taken with you anywhere. "On January 9, 2007, Apple Inc. CEO Steve Jobs unveils the iPhone" (HISTORY.com Editors, 2012). This device took the World Wide Web and made it portable to be accessed anywhere at any time. With the rollout of the iPhone, "Apple launched its online App Store, enabling people to download software applications" such as social media, which was emerging in popularity (HISTORY.com Editors, 2012). Social media sites like Six Degrees in 1977, Friendster in 2001, Myspace in 2003 or even Facebook in 2008 were popular, however they were only available on computers (*The Evolution*, 2020). That was all about to change when Instagram was "founded in 2010 by Stanford graduate Kevin Systrom as a photo-sharing site" and turned into one of the first social medias on the App Store (*The Evolution*, 2020).

This leads us to the Revival Era, which means that "we are back to a high for the company, [because] after much trial and error, they attempted to once again revert back to the original formula" that made them popular in the first place (*A Quick*, 2020). *Bolt* follows the titular talking dog as he gets separated from his owner and tries to find his way back (Williams, 2008). *The Princess and the Frog* adapts the classic fairytale into a modern and more entertaining version (Musker, 2009). *Tangled* inspires everyone to follow their dreams in its

retelling of that classic fairytale (Greno, 2010). *Winnie the Pooh* returns to the Hundred Acre Wood, as the last Disney Animation film to utilize traditional hand-drawn 2D animation (Anderson, 2011). *Wreck-It-Ralph* shares how labels do not define who you truly are when the villain of the video game Fix-It Felix Jr no longer wants to be the bad guy (Moore, 2012). *Frozen* became a cultural phenomenon because the song “Let It Go” was stuck in everyone’s heads for years (Buck, 2013). *Big Hero 6* takes us to San Fransokyo where Hiro and Baymax save the city from evil (Hall, 2014). *Zootopia* shares how a meek bunny rabbit can become something bigger than herself to save the world (Howard, 2016). To round out this era, *Moana* follows the titular character as she dreams to adventure outside of her limits and save the world (Musker, 2016).

As the animation side of the company went back to its roots, the rest of it was focused on expanding. In 2008, Marvel Studios, owned by Paramount Pictures released *Iron Man*, a film about Tony Stark as he gets kidnapped in Afghanistan and has to reinvent himself to save his company, Stark Industries, from being used for evil (Favreau, 2008). Loving the storytelling they saw, Disney purchased Marvel Studios combining “Marvel’s strong global brand and world-renowned library of characters with Disney’s creative skills” and their first film fully in control of the company was *The Avengers (Disney to Acquire, 2009)*. This film sparked history as it was the first big crossover movie event putting Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, Hulk, Black Widow and Hawkeye in the same movie to fight a common enemy, with their history being their own individual films that came before the crossover (Whedon, 2012). The Marvel Cinematic Universe has become a pop culture phenomenon, going strong all the way to this year when *Avengers: Doomsday* will bring together different factions like the Avengers, the Fantastic Four, the TVA and Wakandans to face the common enemy, Dr. Doom (Russo & Russo, 2026).

The Walt Disney company also made another purchase. George Lucas made a tiny film called *Star Wars*, about a moisture farmer who is destined for more, becoming something called a Jedi and fighting against the evil empire (Lucas, 1977). Gaining popularity, changing the film's name to *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*, and creating a prequel trilogy following the downfall of Anakin Skywalker into Darth Vader, the Star Wars franchise became a pop cultural phenomenon (Lucas, 2005). In 2012, “the Walt Disney Company [entered] an agreement to acquire Lucasfilm Ltd. from George Lucas” (*New Star*, 2012). Disney took the franchise and made a new trilogy. The first Disney Star Wars film follows Rey and she learns she is a user of the force and meets beloved characters such as Han Solo and Chewbacca along the way (Abrams, 2015). The film trilogy was ill-received by fans, however Disney struck gold with the Disney+ series *The Mandalorian*. This series was so popular that Disney is bringing Mando to the big screen with *The Mandalorian and Grogu*, where both characters will go on their biggest adventure yet (Favreau, 2026).

The Walt Disney Company also expanded their theme park portfolio, as “Shanghai Disneyland [opened] in 2016” (*Disney History*, 2023). With the constant expansion of the company, these parks have the ability to include properties from Walt Disney Animation, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars and all the other things they own. In the theme park community, the main competitor to Disney would be Universal Studios. Disney was approached by J. K. Rowling to create a land about her popular *Harry Potter* series of books and films. Rowling wanted full, final approval about her theme park land, innovating the way storytelling is told in the theme park space. Naturally, the Walt Disney Company did not like thinking that they lacked control, and by denying Rowling ultimately failed this advancement in theme park storytelling when Universal Orlando Resort opened The Wizarding World of Harry Potter – Hogsmeade at Islands

of Adventure. Disney was unable to catch up to this unique storytelling until they created *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge* which opened at Disneyland and Disney's Hollywood Studios in 2019.

This era also started Disney's obsession with live-action remakes of their animated films. 2010 brought *Alice in Wonderland* a reimagining of the animated film from the weird mind of Tim Burton (Burton, 2010). The next remake was not until 2014 when Disney remade *Sleeping Beauty* but from the eyes of the villain, *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014). The very next year, Disney released *Cinderella*, which was simply the animated film in live action and lacked any of the music that was found in the original (Branagh, 2015). The final early live-action remake was *The Jungle Book*; this was the animated film, but not with all of the songs, and they used hyperrealistic computer graphics to animate real-looking animals (Favreau, 2016). This was only the beginning of a long line of Disney making their animation the same as human acting, not acting together in conjunction.

The Revival Era brought about change in the world, just like it did for Disney. In 2008, Barack Obama became the president of the United States (Presidents of the United, n.d.). President Obama immediately faced the challenge of the Global Financial Crisis. Everything went wrong, including "the collapse of a global asset bubble centred around the US sub-prime mortgage market" meaning that the banks failed when they were not supposed to (Knowles et al., 2017, p. 322). Money became tight, which allowed Disney to capitalize off of everyone by offering the family activity of going to see these relatively-cheap films. Along with the Global Financial Crisis, Obama also had to deal with Osama bin Laden. More specifically, the United States wanted revenge for 9/11. It took a long time to pinpoint the location, but "on May 2, 2011, under orders from President Obama, a special operations unit raided [his] compound and killed bin Laden" (*Osama bin Laden*, n.d.). The Revival Era also housed the beginning of a bunch of

social rights issues, such as the growing LGBTQ+ community. In 2015, Obama and the Supreme Court ruled that “states cannot keep same-sex couples from marrying” (Chappell, 2015). A couple years later, it was time for a new president and the United States elected Donald Trump into office (*Presidents of the United*, n.d.).

This also sparked the next era of Walt Disney Animation — the current Post-Revival Era. This era takes Disney back to a dark time, as that has somehow been a consistent pattern for their entire existence. Disney fans do not like this era of Disney films because of the overabundance of sequels and the new films do not have the same quality as people are expecting. The first film is *Ralph Breaks the Internet*, where Ralph and Vanellope leave the arcade and surf the vast internet, trying to find a replacement steering wheel for Sugar Rush back at the arcade (Moore, 2018). *Frozen 2* brings us back to Arendelle where Anna, Elsa, Kristoff, Sven and Olaf need to travel to the Enchanted Forest to break a curse from the past (Buck, 2019). *Raya and the Last Dragon* follows Raya and Sisu, the last dragon in existence, in their quest to unite the world (Hall, 2021). *Encanto* shows the Madrigal family as Mirabel does not receive a magical gift, but ends up being the core of the family (Bush, 2021). *Strange World* follows the Clade family within a strange world (Hall, 2022). *Wish* was the film for Disney’s 100th anniversary and shows Asha wishing for a really powerful wish in order to perform a government coup (Buck, 2023). *Moana 2* was a Disney+ show until it was stitched together to be the next big-screen adventure of Moana and Maui (Derrick, 2024). Finally, in what could actually be the start of the next era for Disney, *Zootopia 2* returns to the city as Judy and Nick uncover the prejudice that has been facing the reptile family since the city was founded (Bush, 2025).

During this time, Disney produced a few new entries in the merge between human acting and animation. *Mary Poppins Returns* brings us back to 17 Cherry Tree Lane where Mary

Poppins once again takes care of the Banks children and includes a scene where all the characters are in an animated world (Marshall, 2018). *Chip 'n Dale: Rescue Rangers* is a crossover-style film similar to *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, where humans and animations alike come together to solve the case of the missing animated characters (Schaffer, 2022). *Disenchanted* treated audiences to another peak merge of humans and animation, as every person is both a human and an animation, depending on what world they find themselves in (Shankman, 2022). Throughout Disney history, the company has truly perfected their goal of making traditional human acting and animations go hand-in-hand and work one in the same.

Disney has also been working on the next evolution in the form of recreating their classical animated films as new live action films. The more these are made, the more fans are showing their disdain as they feel like Disney is actively ruining what originally made them popular and beloved. These films started well and only got worse as time goes on. For example, the remake of *Beauty and the Beast* is true to the original and includes all of the famous songs like “Be Our Guest” and “Beauty and the Beast” (Condon, 2017). *Christopher Robin* serves as a live-action sequel to the films featuring Winnie the Pooh, having a grown up version of Christopher Robin to hang out with Pooh and the gang (Forster, 2018). *Dumbo* is a poor retelling of the original film where the best part about it is the inclusion of Danny DeVito (Burton, 2019). 2019 also brought *Aladdin*, which, in my opinion, is a solid adaptation of the original film including a new original song for Jasmine called “Speechless” (Ritchie, 2019). 2019 also brought *The Lion King*, using scary CGI that makes the animals look bad and unexpressive, but somehow general audiences enjoyed it more than *Aladdin* (Favreau, 2019). Adding to the 2019 lineup of films, *Lady and the Tramp* was released exclusively on Disney+, using real animals to help make it feel authentic, unlike *The Lion King* (Bean, 2019). The 2020 adaptation of *Mulan* was

abysmal, bringing the rating up to PG-13, but removing Mushu, the songs and just about everything that fans enjoyed about the original (Caro, 2020). In 2021, Disney released *Cruella*, an adaptation of *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* that actually serves as a prequel to the original film (Gillespie, 2021). *Pinocchio* felt like an empty shell of itself, treating audiences to a bland retelling of the original film (Zemeckis, 2022). *Peter Pan & Wendy* strips Neverland of all the magic that makes it, well, Neverland, and “All the pixie dust in the world couldn’t get [viewers] to fly with her if happy thoughts were required” (Fleming, 2023). *The Little Mermaid* made some changes to make the film more diverse and powerful to women (Marshall, 2023). This film actually caused the most backlash of all the live-action remakes by casting Halle Bailey as Ariel. “This casting decision faced a lot of racial backlash as fans of the original film and the Chinese government claimed that it was bad that they were changing the race of the Disney princess” (Reich, 2023, p. 4). Disney did not care and did it again with the release of *Snow White*, casting Rachel Zegler as the titular character who is Colombian-American and not “white” (Webb, 2025). Finally, 2025 also brought about *Lilo & Stitch*, which did everything almost perfectly but did not stick the landing by practically changing the meaning of ohana (Camp, 2025). All of these cash grabs do not even account for the sequels made for the live action films that most people do not see as canon to the official story of these franchises. *102 Dalmations*, *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* and *Mufasa: The Lion King* are all films that add onto the stories of exclusively the live action variant of the franchise and do not apply to the original animated films that the live actions were based on, simply cash grabs (Bobin, 2016; Jenkins, 2024; Lima, 2000; Rønning, 2019).

The overabundance of live-action remakes was not the only thing making fans salty. Disney kept expanding their empire by purchasing 21st Century Fox in 2019. This purchase gave

Disney control of “21st Century Fox’s iconic collection of businesses and franchises” such as *Family Guy*, *The Simpsons*, *Rio* and the *Alvin and the Chipmunks* collection of films (*Disney’s Acquisition*, 2019). This acquisition also gave Disney the rights to the X-Men and Fantastic Four, which they promptly returned to Marvel. They wasted no time using these characters, by putting them in films such as *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* as part of the Illuminati, *Deadpool & Wolverine* as a love letter to the Fox films and *The Fantastic Four: First Steps* as a reintroduction to Marvel’s first family in such a way that will directly lead into *Avengers: Doomsday* later this year (Levy, 2024; Raimi, 2022; Shakman, 2025). This buyout also gave Disney the share of the streaming service Hulu that was owned by 21st Century Fox, now bringing Disney up to 60% of the company.

The Walt Disney Company also went through CEO drama during this current era of films. In 2020, Bob Iger stepped down from CEO and named Bob Chapek as his successor (The Direct, 2026). Due to the continuing flops in animated movies, nonstop bad quality live-action remakes, a drop of quality at the Disney Parks and a ton of other seemingly good business moves that hurt the consumer, nobody likes Bob Chapek. In 2022, Chapek was voted out of the CEO position, giving him the second shortest time in the role, following Ron W. Miller’s single year tenure from 1983-1984 (The Direct, 2026). There was only one man who could fix the mistakes of Bob Chapek and restabilize the Walt Disney Company. That man was former CEO Bob Iger, who retook the mantle of CEO from Chapek in 2022 (The Direct, 2026). Iger remained CEO until March 18th, 2026 when “Josh D’Amaro, [former] Chairman of Disney Experiences” took over the job, becoming the ninth CEO in company history (Oliveros, 2026). Unlike when Chapek took over, Iger only had nice things to comment on like, “Josh D’Amaro is an exceptional leader and the right person to become our next CEO” (Oliveros, 2026).

While the Walt Disney Company was having an identity crisis, so was the world. March 13, 2020 changed everything when everything shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. “COVID-19 most often causes respiratory symptoms that can feel much like a cold, the flu, or pneumonia” however it can be life-threatening depending on a vast array of varying factors (*About COVID-19*, 2024). Once the world began to reopen, the United States became a ground for civil unrest and riots galore. On May 25, 2020, African-American George Floyd died “after being handcuffed and pinned to the ground by Derek Chauvin, a white police officer” (Taylor, 2021). Activists from Minneapolis began to peacefully protest in solidarity with Floyd’s family and the new Black Lives Matter movement. As the days progressed, people who had been cooped up in their houses and needing something to point their frustrations towards turned the protests into riots, and soon “demonstrators began organizing in other cities” (Taylor, 2021). These riots got local as in Tulsa, Oklahoma people began peaceful protesting but “a small group of people who didn't appear to be a part of any organized protests started vandalizing businesses,” causing mass chaos throughout the night (Ellis, 2020).

Riots also occurred due to the 2020 presidential election. People stormed the United States Capital because they believed that Donald Trump won the presidential election and it was rigged towards Joe Biden’s favor. Joe Biden, however, became president of the United States in early 2021 (*Presidents of the United*, n.d.). During Biden’s presidency, the country of freedom found itself in global unrest. “On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine” and the citizens of the United States fought amongst themselves on social media on which side to support (Ray, 2023). The war is still going on, but the United States citizens have moved on to other things. The 2024 election put the presidency back onto Donald Trump’s plate (*Presidents of the United*, n.d.). During Trump’s current presidency, global tensions grew as we

found ourselves in the middle of another war. The “Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in a major attack by Israel and the United States” when we sent bombs their way (Gambrell et al., 2026). Naturally, the citizens of the United States are fighting amongst themselves on social media on which side to support. For example, students of the University of Oklahoma are saying things like “Thank you trump voters for sending us into more war” on the anonymous social media app Yik Yak (*Thank you trump*, 2026). I can only assume that everyone will move on, just like they did with the Russia-Ukraine war.

A big problem in today’s society is artificial intelligence. Many companies are developing AI that makes many tasks obsolete, part of which is research. In its own words, artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT “is designed to answer questions, explain concepts, assist with writing and help users complete a wide variety of informational and creative tasks through conversation” (OpenAI, 2026). The evolution of these artificial intelligence models make it so jobs like writing code, collecting data and even creating content are at risk of being taken over or at least giving the “average individual” with more tools to grow their skills and accomplish things they previously deemed impossible.

What does all of this mean for Disney? Well, the Walt Disney Company has always been one to look ahead towards the future and embrace it for what it is and can be. Pixar is creating a commentary about the overabundant use of technology through an avenue that only they can provide, *Toy Story* (Stanton, 2026). Additionally, Walt Disney Animation is creating a new film called *Hexed* that might be the start of a brand new era for the company, following the really good *Zootopia 2* (Trinidad, 2026). Next year, the company will release *Frozen 3*, a movie that has to prove the world wrong on not being a cash grab (Lee, 2027). On top of that, “a release date for *Frozen 4* hasn’t been announced” despite already being greenlit by the company (Ace,

2026). Disney also finds themselves in a hole with the confirmation of even more live-action remakes of their original films. Later this year, *Moana* will be released in theaters to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the original film with Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson reprising his role Maui (Kail, 2026). A live-action *Tangled* has also been announced which will have Teagan Croft as Rapunzel, Milo Manheim as Flynn Rider and Kathryn Hahn as Mother Gothel (Gracey, n.d.). Speaking of Kathryn Hahn, she will also be appearing in a television series spotlighting the first Disney character, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit (Favreau, n.d.).

Don't forget the theme parks! The Walt Disney Company recently announced that they will be building a brand new resort in Abu Dhabi. Just like other overseas parks, “Disney will not be building this park out of their own pocket” and will be partnering with Miral who are “behind a lot of the other sort of theme park destinations that are currently in Abu Dhabi” (Offhand Disney, 2025, 0:53-1:03). Abu Dhabi will be the seventh Disney resort around the world, once again showing how Disney is a worldwide phenomenon. Additionally, Disney will be creating a sequel to *Coco*, *Incredibles 3*, a live-action *Hercules*, sequels to the live-action *Cruella*, *Princess Diaries*, *Sister Act*, *Mary Poppins*, as well as the original films *Guardians of Tomorrow*, *Gatto*, *Wind in the Willows* and *Spark* (earthtodisney, 2026).

The Walt Disney Company has always been in step with history, and they are not going to stop anytime soon. Starting as a little kid who liked to draw in Marceline, Missouri, Walt Disney grew his passion into a mega-corporation that generation after generation of children grow up with. As a major historical event occurred, Disney was right there. From World War II through the rise of artificial intelligence, the Walt Disney Company will do what it must to not only be with the times, but past the times looking into the future. The most recent era of Walt Disney

Animation has been a bad era for the company, but *Zootopia 2* might be a new start in how the storytelling juggernaut portrays itself to its audience.

Though many companies have helped pave the way for America, it is Disney that's still building it

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