The Wonderful Wizard of Oz:
A Trip Down the Yellow Brick Road

Jodie Kelly

April 26, 2001
In 1937, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was released and became the biggest money-making film of all time. It was a fantasy film aimed at children, something that had not been done up to that point – and now everybody was out to recreate this phenomena. In attempt to emulate the idea, MGM producers Mervyn LeRoy and Arthur Freed bought the copyrights of Frank Baum’s book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* from an independent producer for $75,000, an unusually large sum in that day (*Gone with the Wind* only cost $50,000).

The producers knew making this kind of film would be a challenge, but they didn’t know just how hard it would be. Going from a simply children’s fairy-tale to movie masterpiece is a tall order. Herman J. Mankeiwicz was the first of ten screenwriters to attempt this transition. Nine men later, Noel Langley was the last and the one who produced the “Do Not Make Changes Script” May 14, 1938. Because the script traveled though so many hands, the book had undergone a massive facelift: the silvery shoes were now ruby red slippers, a fourth farm hand was added, there was a substantial increase in the number of munchkins, and the entire Oz sequence was made into a dream.

With the script complete, casting was the next priority, and although this should have been an easy task, two almost fatal accidents caused some rearranging of cast members. In the end, Bert Lahr played the Cowardly Lion, Ray Bolger was the scarecrow, Jack Haley played the Tin man, and after a failed attempt to get Shirley Temple, Judy Garland starred as Dorothy. Also, Frank Morgan played the Wizard, Margret Hamilton was the Wicked Witch, and Billie Burke played Glinda, The Good Witch of the North. A total of four directors worked on putting the Wizard of Oz together: Richard Thorpe, a straight forward man with lack of imagination, worked for two weeks; George Cukor only directed for three days because he felt the picture was “a minor book full of fourth-rate imagery”; Victor Fleming, a rough, rigid man with a quick temper and a heart of gold did most of the leg work at four months, and King Vidor finished the picture in ten days.

The Wizard of Oz premiered on the west coast August 15, 1939 at Grauman’s Chinese Theater. The Wizard of Oz was an instant success among its fans. The day it opened in New York, there was a three thousand-person line wrapped through the streets by 8am. By the end of the day more than 37,000 people had seen picture. But with all the fame and success, the movie didn’t even break even. *The Wizard of Oz*, one of the most beloved films of all time, finished $1 million in debt.
Dear Readers:

My name is Jeffery. Just Jeffery, no last name to call my own. I ain't from around here. I from down south, way down south. But since I was little I wanted to be in them movies. So I left my mama and my papa and walked up north a little ways, to a big town. Well, you ol' folks call them big cities. And here I found me a job. It a wonderful job, full of charm and action. They paid me real great too, $10 dollars a week, that there MGM people ain't too cheap. Not bad for an ol' boy with not much schools in me.

But now, you won't find me name in no books or in no magazines. I never was on that there television. Never even appeared in the damn movies. But they couldn't have done it without me. Hell no, they needed good ol' Jeffery to do everything for 'em. I cleaned up all there messes and there foolin around. I even was the ear they all yapped into. Met some mighty nice folks during my stay. One real sweet little girl, some folk said she was a little loony up there in the head, but I think that just cause she ain't got no papa. Her name was Francis, Francis Gumm. But nobody called her that, even though that her name. They called her Judy, never really knew why, but that what they called her. Not me though, I called her Francis, I think she liked me for it.

Well, now Francis and me got along real good. She talked to me every mornin' before she start. She was making a movie, one of the big ones she said, she said she was going to be a star and I agreed, she was a sweet one that girl.

I loved that girl and I loved that movie she was makin'. It was real nice, full of color and everything. It was goin to be a big hit they said, yep that's what they said. I don't know if it was, never really found out. I was too busy makin' more movies. But I did love that one Francis was in. Had a real good name to. Wizard of Oz they called it... Wizard of Oz...
A Nameless World

Frank was sitting restlessly on his dark brown swivel chair. Writing, writing, writing – but yet no names came. 
*What if we called it Maze, you know kind of like one big puzzle.*
No, maybe Wobniar, like rainbow backwards. 
Writing, writing, and writing some more. 
*Frank, Julie just called and needs her daughters records.*
Frank turns toward the tall gray filing cabinet. 
Julie...Julie Asterman right? 
Yes dear. 
He opens the drawer containing the names that start with A-N and searches. 
*I don’t have her file, honey.*
No darling, Osterman, not Asterman. 
Oh, ok, that makes a difference. 
He opens the O-Z drawer and pulls out the file. 
And it hits him.

A Star is Born

Frank Baum and his wife Maud went to visit the new born
She was the picture perfect bundle of sweet smelling sunshine
Frank held the baby so tenderly, so lovingly,
Frank was going to make the best uncle
But the bundle of light came down with a fever, and died four months later
Not wanting his first little niece to be forgotten, her light gone forever,
he made her a 
star
Dorothy Louise Gage lived on.
Finding Dorothy

"Arthur, I already told you – I want Shirley Temple."
"Sir, I understand, but the chances that Warners will let us borrow her is slim to none. I have brought in another little starlet, her name is Judy Garland and she's got the voice of an angel."
"Unless it is the voice of a Shirley Temple angel, I don't want to hear it."
"Let's just give her a shot, Sir."

Judy Garland, dressed in a conservative pink outfit stood before the two producers. The older one was watching her like a hawk, a very scary hawk at that. His eyes passed over her as if he was thinking of eating her for lunch. The other, younger, kinder man was giving her an encouraging wink. Her hands were a sweaty mess; her stomach was in knots. This was it, this was her chance, let's not mess up now.

The music began, and as the familiar tune flowed over her, her senses were released from the tension holding them hostage. She closed her eyes and began to sing. The voice pelted the room like a hailstorm, bouncing off walls, shaking the windows. The last note echoed through the building as she opened her eyes expectantly.

After a few moments of silence, the older producer spoke, “Thank you Miss Garland. We will get back to you if we need your talents.”

A deflated Judy walked slowly out of the room.

"Sir, I don't know what you are thinking, but that was incredible. You have to admit she was dynamite."
"Arthur, I don't have to admit anything." And then after a long pause, “But yes, she's the one.”
"Great, fabulous...then I will just call up Warner and tell then we don't need Shirley Temple anymore, right?"
"Shirley who?"
Reviving the Past

Happy Birthday Judy, we have a surprise for you. We want to make you a star.
Stars, stars, that is where my father is, in the stars.
Is everything alright Judy? Judy, open the present.
Present time, not like the past, not like the past with my father.
Judy, its a book, the book The Wizard of Oz.
The Wizard of Oz, my father, my father read this one to me.
Judy, we want you to be the Star, we want you to play Dorothy.
Dorothy, I always wanted to be Dorothy.
Dad told me I would be a good Dorothy.

Judy, you are going to be great in this.

This... this is for you dad.
MGM Production No. 1060
Unspoken,
   Unvoiced
      Undisclosed,
         Unwhispered,
            Unbreathable,

No hoopla,
   No noise,
      No trumpet fanfares,
It's coming I promise.
What's coming?
It's coming I promise.
What is it?
MGM Production No. 1060
What is Best for Judy

Mother

Ever since you were little,
I was going to make you a star,

You've got to push to be
The best.

Don't let people stand in your way.
What matters most is
Fame and fortune.

Life is
Sacrifices.

Stay thin.

Work long and hard.

Follow
The goal.

Letting me down
Is not an option.
You must be successful.

I only want what's
Best for you.

Daddy

Ever since you were little,

You were going to be a star.

The best
times of your life are spent
with loved ones.

Fame and fortune
Are worthless without
someone to share them
with.

Life is
Happiness.

Eat what you want.

Play long and hard
Follow
your heart.

You will never be
letting me down.

I only want what's
best for you.
Numbers
1939
Production No. 1060
2.7 million dollars
6 sound stages
1/5 black and white
4/5 color
250 actors
1 star
16 years old
$500 a week
6 months production
3 months advertising
August 17
5,000 seats
101 minutes
1 million expectations

Cherry, cheery firebird red
Spearmint snake so grassy green
Deep ocean dark jean blue
Pure as silk marshmallow white
Dandelion chick sunshine yellow
Lilac passion plum purple
Colors, Colors,
So many colors.
The Land of Oz is star-struck with color.
Meaning

Look to find the meaning deep

Look hard and lllloooonnnngggg deep

Religion and the Christ Figure

Roosevelt’s New Deal

American Isolationism

Cultural turmoil

Hidden spirituality

Deeper,

Deeper,

Deeper,

All the way to the bottom to find the answer.

And the answer is....
...That little Francis, she was a doll. And that laugh she had - wow - just like tinkling stars in the night. But once she stared, she never stopped. They be in the middle of a take and she would just go off, laughin and laughin, so hard I thought she'd had busted. And you know how that laughing can be, soon the whole place would be giggling up a storm. She just had one of those laughs that made everyone show them teeth in a big ol' grin. Everyone loved that giggle of hers, just made them days go by faster.
Pain

“Dorothy, stand right here and rest your right arm on this fence. Wait here for your cue. 3...2....”

“It's not a place you can get to by a boat or a train. It's far, far away. Behind the moon, beyond the rain...”

.....beyond the rain, beyond the rain
Who do I blame?
The thunder for the rain?
The wine for the stain?
The link for the chain?
The air for the plane?
The tracks for the train?
The mother for the pain?

The mother for the pain...

“Dorothy, hello... Judy wake up... did you forget your lines again?”
I'm Melting, I'm Melting
I was leaning by the bit-sized pink house, feet throbbing in the two-sizes-too small high-heeled black boots. Henry yells in his semi-authoritative voice, “Let’s do the scene again.” The sickening sweet lullaby plays again as I cackle my laugh and slowly walk back to the pinpoint black dot marked on the floor. Here I await the falling sensation, the drop of the floor and me along with it, to escape the flames about to come. But the rush never comes, the floor stays concrete beneath me. But I do feel the heat. Just warmth first, like the wind from a bonfire, but then the sticky heat engulfs me. The dark gray smoke is everywhere, filling my eyes, filling my mouth like the taste of burnt toast. Then pain - instant and body consuming pain. I follow the source down to my hands. Like half melted crayons, drops of green painted skin slide off and sizzle onto the yellow brick road. The last I sense is the ringing of a far off ambulance.
...Now I ain't saying that the film was all good. No sirree, them munchkins was a handful, causin all kinds of problems everywhere. Them so short, you wouldn't think they be too big a deal, but they got into all kinds of stuff. Had to have police all over their hotel just to keep stuff in order, people sayng theybe havin' sex orgies all the time. And them would show up for drunk nine times out of ten. Oh, those big wigs would be so mad, but nottin' much they could do. Soo many of those guys, like a hundered or so. One time they got so mad, they started runnin'around and hittin' people. One of 'em even bit poor little Judy in the leg. Well, I can tell you, his little job was gone quicker than bat outta hell. I'm hear to tell you, them munchkins were troooouble with a capital T!
## Accident Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>November 8, 1938</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name, Position</strong></td>
<td>Jack Haley, Actor (Tinman #2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Report:</strong></td>
<td>Mr. Haley was admitted to Good Samaritan Hospital for treatment of a severe infection of his right eye. The cause is suspected to be the aluminum paint used in his costume. There was no permanent damage to his vision.</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>December 23, 1938</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name, Position</strong></td>
<td>Margret Hamilton, Actress (Wicked Witch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Report:</strong></td>
<td>During production, Ms. Hamilton costume caught on fire because of the flammable copper oxide used in her green face paint. Ms. Hamilton was rushed to Good Samaritan Hospital for treatment of severe burns to her chin, nose, right cheek, forehead, and a third degree burn to her right hand.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>February 11, 1938</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name, Position</strong></td>
<td>Betty Danko, Stand-in for Ms. Hamilton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Report:</strong></td>
<td>During the third take of a special effect, Ms. Danko was injured by an exploding pipe. She suffered from a bruised left leg, and a two-inch deep wound that circled her leg.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
March 25, 2001

Dear authors, writers, newspapers, magazines, publishers, philosophers, intellects, adults, children, and all other it may concern:

There has been much controversy over the meaning of my latest book-turned-movie, The Wizard Of Oz. And while all of the speculations have been quite entertaining, none are true. There is no meaning, no hidden agenda to the story. I am not a communist; I am not affiliated with any religion, nor do I consider myself an atheist. There are no political motives; it has nothing to do with farmers and steal workers. It is not a cry for help or any type of rescue plan. There is absolutely, positively, no meaning to the story. I repeat, **there is no underlying meaning to the Wizard of Oz.**

Thank you for your time,

[Signature]

Frank Baum
Instant Energy

It is February 15, ten weeks into production. Mickey Rooney has stopped by to visit Judy. In between takes, the two of them go and talk in Judy’s dressing room.

“Mickey, I am absolutely exhausted. My head hurts, my hands are shaking, my voice is almost gone. I can’t deal with this. I don’t know how you do it? Twelve shows a day, Plus five hours of shooting your movie, I can’t imagine.”

“Come on Judy, hang in there. You’re doing just fine babe”

“No Mickey, I really don’t think I can do this anymore. I have been up since 4:30 this morning and it is now it is almost 8. I had one fifteen minute break, my body is running on a three cups of coffee and a few carrot sticks. I am so weak, I don’t know how much more I can do and we still have a three more scenes to shoot.”

“Judy, here, come here. I’ve got a secret for you. Take these, there an old actors secret. Everybody uses them - instant energy pills they call them. But you got to be careful, there pretty powerful for such small blue things. Watch yourself, sweets.”

“Thanks, Mickey, thanks a lot, you saved my life.”
...And if you thought them munchkins was a problem, just wait to hear about that Terry. First of all that dumb dog never really answered to his own dumb name. They keep calling him, Toto, Toto, Toto, but he never come. I think they should a just called ’em Terry in the movie, woulda been so much easier. And then that one scene he got his damn little paw caught in the fan. Them trainers were just no good. They said they had him trained good to stay away from all that there equipment, but he didn’t. His little paw got stuck in that fan and the dog couln’ work for a week, and then he was so damned scared he never wanted to do nothing. What a way to run a movie...

Little blue circles
Moremorefasterfaster now
Pop those pills
We're Off to See the Wizard
Four pairs of hands clenched tightly in fear
Expressions of shock and terror displayed
Sounds, so loud, echo through the dark green tunnel
The 13th take of the unbearable scene
Bert's costume, made of real lions skin hangs heavy on the shoulders and,
drenched with sweat, clings painfully with every movement. An
aroma so vile seeps from the outfit causing not only Bert but anything
he touches to smell like a zoo.
The tightly wrapped cloth clenching Judy's middle section is to the point of
Suffocation and the lucky gold coin given to her by her father is
beginning to slip from the ruby red slipper.
The heavy metal axe, the third one made because the other two were
destroyed in fits of rage, begins to shake in Jack's arm as his muscles
weaken.
The shock of terror on Ray's face appears so natural, it seems that
maybe all of his early childhood family experiences came in handy.
But the straw, the itchy, scratchy, chafing straw, falls like raindrops
out of his costume – causing a 14th take of the scene
The Director is screaming, "Again! Again! This isn't going to do!"
Too Much

A lion, A tin man, a scarecrow, and a girl sing on stage.
"We're off to see the Wizard the Wonderful Wizard of Oz, we hear he is."

The director screams.
"No, No, stop, Judy you have got to look happy, full of energy -- do it again."

Four characters try it again.
"We're off to see the Wizard the Wonderful Wizard of Oz, we hear."

The director screams.
"Judy, Judy, come on, focus, smile and skip, smile and skip-- its not that hard doll. -- Again!"

Four characters try it again.
"We're off to see the Wizard the Wonderful Wizard of..."

The director screams.
Ms. Garland, do you not understand? Skip, dear skip, I want to see energy -- ENERGY! Let's go again!

Four characters try it again.
"We're off..."

The director screams.
Judy, Judy, get up get up doll, somebody call the ambulance -Judy has fainted
Three characters look upon their fourth, lying on the floor from exhaustion and starvation.
Little Blue Circles
No more, No more, make it slow
Its all over now
Get out the Scissors

It's too long, it can't be done, what are we going to do, cut a scene, no we can't cut a scene, what would we cut, but the audience will never make it, no, they will never make it. This is the longest movie to date, something must be done, well what can go, what isn't necessary, maybe we could eliminate a character, no that would mean re-filming too many scenes, we have to watch the budget, try not to lose too much money, what about the forest scene, that could go I guess, the song, the song needs to go, that's it, that will cut a good ten minutes off, than it would be long but not too long, do-able long, yes the Jitterbug must go!
It was finished.
It took 5 months and 3 days.
The date was March 16, 1939.
The music was recorded.
Edits were done.
All the munchkins were gone.
Buddy Ebsin was looking for a new job.
Victor Fleming was directing *Gone With the Wind*.
Margaret Hamilton was home with her 3-year old son.
Bert Lahr and Jack Haley had gone to dinner.
Ray Bolger was asleep.
Judy Garland was in tears
   As the set was torn down piece by piece.
The next great fantasy movie had be made.
It took 5 months and 3 days.
It was finished.
MGM Production No. 1060
Spoken,
   Voiced,
      Disclosed,
         Whispered,
   Breathable
Hoopla,
   Noise,
   Trumpet Fanfares,
It's here, its here!
What's here?
It's finally here!
What is it?
The Wizard of Oz
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Presents
A Victor Fleming Production

THE WIZARD OF OZ

THE CAST

Dorothy         Judy Garland
Professor Marvel Frank Morgan
Hunk             Ray Bolger
Zeke             Bert Lahr
Hickory          Jack Haley
Glinda           Billie Burke
Miss Gulch       Margaret Hamilton
Uncle Henry      Charley Grapewin
Nikko           Pat Walshe
Auntie Em        Clara Blandick
Toto             Toto
and The Munchkins

Directed by Victor Fleming
Produced by Mervyn LeRoy
Screenplay by
Noel Langley, Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf
Adaptation by Noel Langley
From the book by L. Frank Baum
Musical Adaptation by Herbert Stothart
The Lyrics: E. Y. Harburg
The Music: Harold Arlen
Associate Conductor: George Stoll
Orchestral and Vocal Arrangements:
George Bassman, Murray Cutler, Paul Marquardt and Ken Darby
Musical Numbers Staged by Bobby Connolly
Photographed in Technicolor by Harold Rosson, A.S.C.
Associate: Allen Davy, A.S.C.
Technicolor Color Director: Natalie Kalmus
Associate: Henri Jaffa
Recording Director: Douglas Shearer
Art Director: Cedric Gibbons
Associate: William A. Horning
Set Decorations by Edwin B. Willis
Special Effects by Arnold Gillespie
Costumes by Adrian
Character Makeups Created by Jack Dawn
Film Editor: Blanche Sewell
Running Time: 100 minutes

* The hand Winged Monkey.
Opening Night

Jonny and I want to see it
Mommy, Daddy and I were there
I greatly anticipated it
We waited three hours
Daddy waited in line for mommy and me
I had been waiting since 7am
It was our third date
This was my first movie
The 100th critique
It was supposed to be for kids, we thought we would have plenty of time to kiss
It was made just for me, I couldn’t wait
I had to look from a child’s perspective, wasn’t sure what to expect
EVERYONE was there: Billy, Sam, Kelly, Tony, Tommy, Meg...
The peoples were so loud, I almost couldn’t hear
The crowd roared with excitement
When Judy appeared all the guys whistled
I wanna be just like Dorothy
Ms. Garland performed well
The colors were fantastic, and those special effects – amazing!
I would have been scared to ride in the tornado
The effects were adequate for today’s technology
It was great! (I think I missed a few scenes though)
I loved it sooo much, but I had to hide my eyes when the witch came
MGM succeeded, yet it lacked the spark of Disney’s creation.
The First Showing

It is Friday night. The faded navy pillows lined the floor. A huge vat of freshly buttered and highly over salted popcorn rests between three steamy cups of hot chocolate, marshmallows dripping over the sides. Two sets of legs are sprawled out over the floor: one short pair covered with comfy pink pajamas, the other long and muscular wearing old gray sweatpants and beat-up red slippers. The lights have been dimmed so the TV set glows luminously throughout the room. The house is quiet; the baby has been put to bed. Mom walks into the room carrying a huge red blanket to cover chilly toes and lies down beside the two. The movie is removed from the newly opened box, and slid into the VCR. Anticipation grows just as it did 50 years ago with the first showing. One set of big green star-struck eyes is pasted to the set as the music begins to play and The Wizard of Oz appears on the television screen.
Judy made 32 films, starred in her own TV series, and sang in over 1,000 concerts. She was three weeks into her 5th marriage when she died from a drug overdose. She was 47.

Ray lived his last years in a nursing home, where he received a telegram from President Reagan on his 83rd birthday. He died at 83 years of age of cancer.

Jack lived in Beverly Hills. He died when he was 80.
Bert was without a studio contract after Oz, and considered returning to Broadway, but never did. He had a massive intestinal hemorrhage and died at age 72 in New York.

Frank was beginning the filming of "Annie Get Your Gun" in the role of Buffalo Bill, when he died in his sleep at the age of 59.

Margaret was 82 when she died of a heart attack in a nursing home in Salisbury, Conn.
Between 1915 and 1960, Billie made more than 80 pictures. Billie died at 84 years of age in the Rockwell Sanitarium of heart ailment and hardening of the arteries.

*Terry died around 1945 (11 yrs. old).*
*She was buried on their kennel property in the San Fernando Valley.*
Footnotes

Pieces # 2, #10, #13, #16 - From Jeffery

These pieces were created after talking to my friends in theater. They all said that the stage crew always did so much and yet never got much credit for it. They heard all the gossip and solved all the problems, just like Jeffery does. The dialect came from a character in the play “Major Barbara” by George Shaw.

The munchkin piece is all facts. According to the book, The Making of the Wizard of Oz, police were regularly called in to the hotels where the little people were staying. One of them actually did bite Judy Garland on the leg during an uncontrollable chaotic moment. He was fired on the spot.

Pieces, #3 – A Nameless World

Nobody truly knows how Frank Baum came up with the name Oz. Some say it happened because of a filing cabinet, others say it was the “oohs and aaahhs” of the children when he told his stories.

Piece #6 – Reviving the Past

On Judy’s 15th birthday, the Wizard of Oz script was presented to her and she was asked to star as Dorothy. Remembering that her father had always read this story to her as a little girl, she immediately accepted the role.

Pieces #7 – Production #1060

When the Wizard of Oz was first being made, all advertising was off limits. They wanted to keep it as secret as possible until it was finished.

Pieces #7, #11 – Mother vs. Father

This piece was inspired from the made-for-TV movie on Judy Garland’s life. Judy was definitely Daddy’s girl. The relationship between Judy’s mother and herself was always very strained, especially after the death of her father.
Pieces #9 and #14 – Meaning and Letter from Frank Baum

Over the years, there has been huge controversy over the meaning of the *Wizard of Oz*. A full-page article was even published in the Pacific News that included an elaborate scheme of how each character represented a type of individual supporting or against the populist movement. All connections have been denied, and there is apparently no meaning of the story.

Pieces #15, #17, #19, 20- Instant Energy, Pill Haiku, Too Much

This series was based on the book *Get Happy, a Biography of Judy Garland*. It was during the production of this movie that Judy was introduced to sleeping pills, caffeine pills, and a variety of other drugs. Later in her life, she blamed these incidents and MGM studios for her depression, which eventually led to her suicide.

Piece #21 – Get Out the Scissors

After the first secret preview of the movie, the audience was polled on how they liked it. A common answer was that it was too long. So after much debating, they cut one of the woods scenes along with the song “The Jitterbug.”

Piece #24 – Opening Night

This piece rotates between the voices of three different aged characters and shows what each age group thought. The youngest generation and the teenagers loved the film and usually made up 80% of the audience. The critiques on opening night disliked the film greatly and gave extremely negative reviews.

Piece #25 – The first showing

This piece was simply to show the timelessness of the film. Even today, children and adults alike enjoy the movie.
Bibliography


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