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FEB 5 1993

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MOTION PICTURE, BROADCASTING
AND RECORDED SOUND DIVISION

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

FEB 5 1993

STATEMENT BY: ROGER L. MAYER, PRESIDENT
TURNER ENTERTAINMENT CO.

MOTION PICTURE, BROADCASTING
AND RECORDED SOUND DIVISION

TO: THE STUDY PANEL ON THE STATE OF AMERICAN
FILM PRESERVATION

DATE: 2/5/93

Attached to this statement is a review of the status and policy on film preservation of the Turner Entertainment Co. libraries of film. Hopefully the extent and scope of this effort will present some guidelines as to the amount of time and effort required to preserve large libraries of film.

It is also an indication that proper goals are perhaps even more attainable in the private sector if both the problems and the solutions are objectively examined. It is absolutely key that this study promulgate an understanding concerning not only the artistic and cultural benefit of film preservation, but the economic benefit as well. To this effect, we recommend consideration of promoting the values of ownership, including the possible extension of copyright protection.

We also recommend a study of possible sources of support for film preservation. We would suggest some method by which film preservation technological information be made available on a worldwide basis and regularly studied and disseminated as circumstances change. This information could be used by both public and private entities so that money is appropriately utilized for preservation activities.

Obviously we feel that uniform or mandated preservation guidelines are unnecessary. We think general guidelines would be sufficient.

In regard to the possibility of national coordination of preservation information, we would be in favor of it and would be happy to cooperate. With regard to a national inventory of film or film materials, we feel that such a concept would probably be impractical and very costly.

There are many aspects that will probably be touched upon in your study. We are willing to make ourselves available to help in any way.

Attachment

TURNER ENTERTAINMENT CO.

STATUS AND POLICY ON FILM PRESERVATION

HISTORY

The Turner library consists of 1750 MGM features, over 700 cartoons, and about 1200 short subjects from the inception of that company in 1924 to June of 1986 when it was purchased by Turner, about 800 Warner Bros. features released before 1950 and 1000 Warner Bros. shorts released before 1948, and 800 RKO features from 1930 to 1957, as well as many hundreds of hours of television programming originally photographed on 35mm film.

Conversion from nitrate was started at MGM in about 1967, and eventually all product, regardless of how minor, including shorts and trailers, was converted to safety film. The Warner Bros. library was partially converted to safety film during the period when it was owned by United Artists (1956-81), and the conversion of the features was completed by MGM after its merger with UA in 1981. About 60% of the RKO library was converted to safety by that company, and the work has been completed by Turner since its acquisition of RKO in 1988.

PRESENT PRESERVATION STATUS

MGM pictures photographed in the 3-strip Technicolor process were all converted to Color Reversal Intermediate film stock in the mid-70s. Since this type of film has been found to be less permanent than the current interpositive and internegative stocks, about 15 features have been re transferred from the original camera negatives to the newer film types. This is continuing at the rate of about six pictures per year.

All of the Warner features have been transferred to safety stock, but about 280 of them have fine-grain masters only. A three year project is in effect to complete this with duplicate negatives and sound tracks, thus fully protecting these features. Most of the Warner Bros. short subjects have not been transferred to safety, having a low priority due to lack of commercial interest. These will eventually be done following the more important work of protecting the features. There are 25 Technicolor features in the Warner Bros. library, all of which have been properly converted to safety stock.

All of the RKO library is now converted to safety, but again, a fair number of these have only safety fine-grains. These will have duplicate negatives made following the current project on the Warner Bros. pictures described above. The seven Technicolor pictures made during the nitrate era were converted to safety in the last two years.

PROTECTION POLICY

During the period of MGM production, there was a standing policy to make fine-grain masters on all black and white films, and both interpositives and separation masters on the color films. This policy covered both features and shorts. This policy continues with the manufacture of interpositives for new TV production and both interpositives and separation masters for new theatrical features.

There are strict storage standards, whereby the protection masters are placed in remote underground locations, and the printing negatives are kept in the Los Angeles facility to have convenient access to laboratories for manufacturing new copies. Protection masters (interpositives) on color films are stored in a refrigerated facility to retard the fading of the color dyes.

Film in the Los Angeles storage facility is periodically checked for deterioration, and duplicated from master copies whenever a problem is found.

Roger L. Mayer - President

Richard P. May - Vice President, Film Preservation and Distribution Services

February 4, 1993