



## The advent of sound

Motion pictures have never been totally silent since their beginning: live organists, pianists, symphonic orchestras accompanied the projection of films and sometimes live actors stood behind the screen to speak the lines.

The era of the 'talking pictures' or 'talkies' however started by the mid-1920s when the development of electronic sound recording technologies made it practical to incorporate a soundtrack of speech, music and sound effects synchronized with the action on the screen. By 1930, silent film was practically extinct in the US and already being referred to as 'the old medium'.

At first the sounds were often recorded onto a record-like disc. The American Studio company Warner Bros. used a pre-recorded on-disc music score, and most major Hollywood studios made two versions of their films: a 'silent' version (with music and effects) and a 'sound' version.

The coming of sound created many problems: the difference of the languages, the voice and the diction of the actors, noisy camera movements which disturbed the soundtrack, the need for hidden microphones which made the movement of actors difficult. Later silent films were transformed into sound films, and by the mid-1930s, film industry studios had become sound-film factories.

### ACTIVITIES

1 Read the passage and say if the statements are true (T) or false (F). Correct the false ones.

- 1 At the beginning, films were totally silent.
- 2 Organists, pianists, symphonic orchestras accompanied the projection of films.
- 3 The era of 'talkies' started by the mid-1910s.
- 4 The new technologies permitted the incorporation of speech, sound effects and music.
- 5 Silent films disappeared.
- 6 At first the sounds were often recorded onto a record-like disc.
- 7 Most Hollywood studios only used silent versions.
- 8 There were some problems related to producing films with sound.
- 9 There were problems with the languages.
- 10 The hidden microphones made the movements of the actors easy.

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