

MGM LOGO HISTORY AND THE 2008 RESTORATION PROCESS

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Our MGM Logo is an historic and iconic branding with a rich history dating back to the earliest days of Hollywood. Its evolutionary journey through the past 93 years echoes that of the significant creative and technological advancements of the film making craft itself, while never straying far from its initial design and concept. A history that must be preserved for future generations of movie lovers, as well as for current and future MGM Employees to take pride in.

Starting in 2007 an effort was under taken to restore the condition of our logo, not to redesign, but to refresh and update. While working on the restoration, we rediscovered the history of the logo, as well as adding a new chapter. The result of this work made its debut on the newest installment of the James Bond franchise "Quantum of Solace", closely followed on "Valkyrie".

The logo was first designed for Goldwyn Pictures Corporation, in 1916. Howard Deitz, a Publicity Executive, chose to use a lion as the studio's mascot, paying tribute to his alma mater, Columbia University. The inspiration was the school's fight song "Roar, Lion, Roar". Mr. Deitz is also credited for writing our motto "Ars Gratia Artis", Latin meaning "Art for Art's Sake". "Slats" was the first lion used on Goldwyn Pictures logo from 1917 until 1924, first appearing on the 1917 release "Polly of the Circus".

Over the next nine decades, only five official lions that have graced our logo, "Slats", "Jackie", "Tanner", "George" and "Leo".

After the 1924 merger that created MGM, "Slats" was retained and continued to appear on our logo until 1928. He appeared on MGM's first release "He Who Gets Slapped", starring Lon Chaney, in 1924. At the time of the merger the only change made to the logo was Metro Goldwyn Mayer replaced A Goldwyn Picture in the marquee below the film ribbons. "Slats" was trained to roar on cue by Volney Phifer, Hollywood's premier animal trainer and toured the world to signify MGM's launch. He was born at the Dublin Zoo, date unknown and died in 1936. By that time Mr. Phifer had retired to his farm in Gillette, New Jersey, where he boarded animals used on Broadway. Upon "Slats'" death he was buried on the farm, a small blank block of granite marked the grave. Additionally, Mr. Phifer planted a pine tree directly over the grave, insisting that it's roots would "hold down the lion's spirit", which is a part of a secret of European wisdom.

Apparently that tree still stands today, however the granite marker was removed a long time ago.

In 1928 a new Lion was introduced, "Jackie", selected because he was a look a like for "Slats". It is believed that it is "Jackie" in the photograph of a lion being filmed and recorded hanging in the halls of MGM. Before his official introduction he did appear on three earlier films, "Greed" (1924), "Ben Hur" (1925) and "Flesh and the Devil" (1926). The most famous MGM title he appeared on was "The Wizard Of Oz" in 1939. However that was not to be "Jackie's" most significant contribution to history. He was the first of our lions to be heard by our audience, via a gramophone recording, on July 31, 1928 on "White Shadow Of The Seven Seas", the first sounded MGM production. This was to be the first of several technological advances that our logo will display over the next 8 decades. "Jackie" continued to appear on all of MGM's black and white films until 1956, even with the development of color film.

"Jackie" was born circa 1915 and was captured as a cub in the Nubian dessert. He spent much of his life in Hollywood as a performer in jungle pictures, eventually chosen to appear on our logo. He, like "Slats", would tour the world on behalf of the studio. "Jackie" was nick named "Leo The Lucky" after surviving two train wrecks, an earthquake, a boat sinking, an explosion at the studio and a plane crash.

On September 16, 1927, Martin "Marty" Jenson, a pilot hired to ferry "Jackie" cross-country, took off from Camp Kearny Airfield, near San Diego in a B-1 Brougham airplane, a modified version of Charles Lindbergh's "Spirit Of St. Louis". Installed behind the pilot's seat was a glass enclosed iron bar cage. However, the plane was over weight with the 350-pound cat aboard and went down in the mountains of northern Arizona, neither Marty or "Jackie" was seriously injured. However, in need of help, Marty left "Jackie" with sandwiches, milk and water as he spent days walking until coming across ranch cowhands. While thin and weak, "Jackie" was returned to MGM's handlers and was well cared for the rest of his life.

In 1931 he made his farewell tour, after which he retired, living out his life at the Philadelphia Zoo. While he appeared ferocious on screen, his keepers at the zoo described him as having a very gentle spirit. Having suffered from a heart ailment for several months, "Jackie" passed away on February 26, 1935, found by his keeper, John McCullen.

Upon his death the zoo contacted MGM as they owned "Jackie" so that the studio could arrangements for his burial. The chain of events is not known, however his skin is currently on display in the McPherson Museum in McPherson, Kansas. Carla Barber, the curator of the museum, said that "Jackie" was apparently flown to Los Angeles where Thomas Hodges, a taxidermist in Hollywood, preserved the skin as a rug. Francis Vaniman, then the President of a bank in McPherson was interested in taxidermy and received a letter from an acquaintance in Hollywood, asking if he would be interested in acquiring the rug. He was and it became a prize addition to his collection of animal skins, which he displayed on the third floor of his home. Upon his death, the house became the town museum and the rug was also donated, still displayed in the same third floor "African Room".

In the late 1920's Technicolor began to experiment with its two-strip color film process. During the early 1930s, two test variations of the logo were created for MGM's first color films, utilizing two different, unnamed lions. One of these two lions appeared on the 1932 film "Roast Beef and Movies", however neither are generally considered to be one of the five "official" logo lions. These test logos were used until 1934 when a two strip colorized version of the black and white "Jackie" logo was introduced. This was short lived as production switched to the full three-strip Technicolor film process. But as it did first with sound, our logo remained unchanged as another technological step forward in filmmaking occurred.

As "The Golden Age Of Hollywood" emerged, our third lion was introduced, "Tanner" in 1934. He would have the second longest reign, lasting 22 years. Often described as the most "angry" lion, "Tanner" snarled more then any of the others. In 1934, as MGM began producing full three-strip Technicolor films, the logo was modified for color. "Tanner" first appeared before "Happy Harmonies", starting in 1934, while his first feature film was "Sweethearts" in 1938. He was used on all MGM Technicolor films from 1934-1956, as well as our cartoons, on and off, from 1938-1967. During this period cinemascope was introduced and the logo went through not only its third technological advancement, but underwent its most significant design change.

In order to adapt the logo for the new wide screen format, the marquee with the company name beneath the film ribbon was removed. Metro Goldwyn Mayer was placed a top the logo, above the film loop, in a slight arc, the same location it still remains today.

Additionally, while the color has been altered over time, it is still the same hand painted lettering that spells out MGM. Cinemascope (2.35 aspect ratio) versions of both "Jackie" and "Tanner" were created, "Jackie" for black and white films, "Tanner" for color. Also created were versions of the new design for the more traditional Academy (1.85) aspect ratio.

"Tanner's" reign came to an end in 1956 when "George" was introduced. More heavily "maned" than any of the others, he appeared on the logo for about 2 years. Perhaps the most famous of which was "The Wings of Eagles", directed by John Ford, starring John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara. No reason has been found as to why "George" replaced "Tanner" or why he only lasted for such a brief amount of time.

Enter "Leo", whose reign began in 1957 and despite a very brief period between 1966-68, is still our mascot to the present day. During those two brief years the "medallion" or "stylized" logo was introduced, used on only three films, the most well known is "2001: A Space Odyssey" in 1968.

No one is really sure if the lion purchased from Henry Trefflich, an animal importer and dealer, was actually named "Leo". However, that was the name that stuck, "Leo The Lion". When first introduced, two variants of the logo were created, a longer 3-roar, 14 second version and the more commonly known, shorter 2-roar 10 second version, the later still in use today. Both versions use the same take, but when it was shortened the first roar was removed. At this time, the M, G, and M in the company name was turned red, while the rest of the lettering was more golden in color, up until that point the entire company had been mostly white. This same golden color was introduced to the laurels, while the mask remained the same red and black it had been since the 1930s. Numerous other adjustments were made to the logo since "Leo" was introduced, but the overall design remained unchanged. Over time, the logo would be re-purposed to meet the various needs of the studio, for example home entertainment, but without altering the well-known icon.

Two significant changes took place in 1982. One was the branding merger of MGM and United Artists. Metro Goldwyn Mayer was replaced with MGM/UA Entertainment Co, still above the film ribbon. This lasted until 1987, when it was decided that separate brandings for each company would once again be used. At this time, with MGM back

on top of the logo, the color of the lettering was once again changed to the look of the current logo, primarily gold.

The second significant change involved "Leo's" voice, which was one of the first logo sound tracks to actually be trade marked. And to this day is still one of the most recognized logo sounds, perhaps second only to the NBC Chimes. In 1982 the studio was producing "Poltergeist", at which time "Leo's" roar was still only a mono audio track. Mark Mangini, a member of the sound crew, had recorded animal sounds, including lions, for use in the film itself. These raw elements were altered to create the creature sound effects in the film. However while working on the mix, Mark asked Steven Spielberg, if he would like to use the stereo lion sounds he recorded in order to make a new roar for the logo. Steven gave the OK and upon the release of the film, "Leo" was now being heard in stereo. In 1995, Mark was brought back and utilizing the same audio elements used from 1982, re-created "Leo's" roar in 5.1 surround sound.

The last adjustment made to the logo prior to the restoration was the addition of our URL, www.mgm.com in 2001.

During the period of time when MGM was bought and sold, the quality of the logo elements deteriorated. Due in part perhaps to the continued "duping down" of the film elements, an unacceptable amount of flicker, grain and a softening of the image was introduced. The golden hues became dark, muddy and red. "Leo's" tongue, once pink turned black. As MGM was itself re-emerging, conversations in the marketing department began about the state of the logo and what can be done to restore it to a pristine state worthy of this iconic brand.

In 2007, under the creative direction of Perry Stahman and Christian Davin, and with the support of Erik Lomis, it was decided that the logo needed to be restored. This was not to be a re-design, but a refreshing, as it was vital to maintain the historic link to our branded past. It was this directive that set up perhaps the most significant challenge we faced, finding elements that were still in good condition and retained enough detail for us to work with.

To locate "Leo", Ed Vigdor along with Jesse Causey, lead the effort to locate a viable piece of film, hoping to locate the original camera negative from 1956. Yvonne Medrano, in MGM's Technical Services department reviewed countless boxes of logo elements, going back 20 years. These more recent elements did not yield what was needed. Additionally there was no sign of the original 1956 negative. Ed dug

deeper and went further back into history, cultivating leads, speaking to former MGM employees who had worked on the logo. Eventually all lead me to Warner Brothers, who had ownership of our historic library pre-dating 1985. WB's Media Archive Department was able to cull through numerous un-reconciled databases locating some elements that were stored in the Kansas salt mines, which they had trucked to Los Angeles. Unfortunately, none were useable and at that point we came to the realization that the original negative would not be located. Ed decided that our best option would be to scan the logo from one of our older films. We reviewed many DVDs of MGM titles, after "Leo" was introduced, and discovered the original longer, 3-roar logo, ironically on the 1958 release of "Cat On A Hot Tin Roof". Warner Brother's had carefully maintained the original negative of the feature and agreed to digitally scan the logo. We theorized that this element is perhaps no more than four or five film generations away from the original camera negative. We had our element and the restoration work on "Leo" could begin.

In order to get every bit of picture information we could capture, the logo was scanned at very high resolution. The first step was to bring out and restore as much detail as possible as well as clean up some film dirt and scratches from the original film. Chris Dobbs, our technical advisor on the project, recommended that we utilize a proprietary process at a company called DTS. They are able, on a pixel level, to bring out a great amount of detail, clean up and enhance.

The results were astonishing and the files were turned over to Rick Sparr and the team at Pacific Title, where additional work was required and the final compositing work would eventually be done. The rest of the Pac Title team was comprised of David Sosalla, Visual Effects Supervisor and Robert Montgomery, digital compositor. One artifact that still needed to be addressed was a red ring outlining "Leo". The solution was to create a 3D model of the mane, which was then composited and blended onto his existing mane. The logo was now experiencing yet another filmmaking technological advancement, from photo-optical to digital compositing. Another aspect of "Leo" that needed attention was that of his ears. In all the older logos, his ears moved behind the film loop, so the tips of his ears had to be digital created. This gave us the ability to make one small adjustments as well, instead of his left ear staying behind the film, to give the logo a bit of depth, it now crosses in front of the film ribbon. "Leo" was once again looking great.

Simotaneous to the work being done on "Leo", the rest of the elements were being addressed. Tinker Candlish headed this portion of the process; a long time MGM Art Department employee who had re-joined the marketing department. In 2001 she created the file that were used to manufacture the logo atop of the building as well as the glass panels on the ground floor. This provided her with an excellent place to begin. Those logos however have a highly polished metallic gold film ribbon, which has never been the look of the historic theatrical logo. With the assistance of Sue Peck, one of MGM's archivist, we explored the elements that are stored at MGM's warehouse in down town Los Angeles, known as the DDC. We unearthed two paintings of the logo dating back to 1992. One of these was scanned, of which various elements were utilized. One other change we decided to make was to replace the red and black mask with a gold mask; which has been in use on our print logo for many years.

After compositing the various elements together and looking at numerous initial creative explorations, Paul Meraz, a graphic designer , was hired to do the fine work needed to sharpen and finalize the logo. Other than "Leo", all the other elements that comprise the logo is hand-painted artwork. Paul painstakingly retraced each letter in order to sharpen them as well as create depth. The same work was done on the film ribbon, each sprocket hole, the laurels and the mask. Once completed, we continued to fine-tune the logo, looking at color, shading, texture and detail. Once initial approval was given, this was turned over to Pac Title for compositing and color correction.

Being that we were restoring the longer 3-roar version of the logo, the current sound element would no longer work, a third roar was required. Who better to turn to for assistance than Mark Mangini? He was the perfect person to once again create "Leo's" voice, as he had done so twice before. A few months prior to our contacting him, he had been over seas recording new animal sounds, including lions. While doing so, he had actually thought about our logo and how great an opportunity it would be to once again give "Leo" a new voice. We were intrigued with the idea to utilize the new digital recordings, however upon hearing them they were too different and didn't meet the criteria; that being to maintain the historical accuracy of the logo. Therefore he went back to the original 1982 elements, which he still had, to re-cut, re-sync and embellish. At that point they were turned over to Eric Martel at Martel Sound who did the re-mix.

The restoration work was nearly complete; all that was needed was an opportunity to present it to Mr. Sloan and Ms. Parent, who had just recently joined MGM. In summer 2008 editorial work on "Valkyrie" was nearing completion and the film's Post-Production Supervisor asked me if there was a better logo element available than the current element. I took the opportunity to schedule a screening with Michael Vollman, our Executive Vice President of Marketing. He liked what he saw, had a few comments, but felt that it would be difficult to arrange a screening for Mr. Sloan and Ms. Parent, as their attention was focused elsewhere.

That changed the week before Labor Day, while screening a trailer, they asked Mike about the condition of our logo, why it looked so bad. Mike reminded them about the restoration work which they wanted to see and inquired if we could have it ready for the release of "Quantum of Solace". The next day, August 29th, a screening was arranged, at which time, Ms. Parent had a few minor color comments, but in general was very pleased with the restoration, as was Mr. Sloan. At that time, I assured them that we could successfully address her comments and meet the September 12th deadline I was given to re-supply the logo and have it attached to the new Bond film.

About a year and a half had passed since we first started looking for elements. During that time, there were several conversations regarding how appropriate, and quite frankly great, it would be for the restored logo to make its debut on MGM's most successful and longest running franchise. We had 10 days to address the last comments, finish and deliver; of course we made it.

"Leo's" fifty-two year reign as our mascot can now continue far into the future, a very promising future for "Leo" and Metro Goldwyn Mayer.