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| **Messmer, Otto (August 16, 1892–October 28, 1983)** |
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| Otto Messmer was a pioneering animator whose Felix the Cat was the first internationally famous cartoon character. Messmer was born in New Jersey and went to art school before beginning newspaper cartooning. After working with several animation companies, he joined with Pat Sullivan (1887–1933) to produce cartoons featuring Charlie Chaplin (1889–1977). It was their work animating Chaplin that laid part of the foundation in 1919 for the creation of Felix, a black cat whose independence, resourcefulness, and physicality resembled that of the Tramp. The Felix series, with two films produced a month, was a great success, and Felix himself became one of the first mass-merchandized characters. His attraction was due not only to the anarchic gags — as Messmer took advantage of the medium to allow Felix to morph parts of his body to extricate himself from situations — but also to a character that was both visually abstract (and thus easily appropriable) and psychologically concrete (he was always shown thinking). Audiences young and old could identify with a character who was both an adult and a child, animal and human. Sullivan’s decision not to quickly move to sound meant the end of their cinematic version of Felix (he would be resuscitated later in film and television), leaving Messmer to subsequently focus on the comic strip version of the character. Felix, however, had already been a significant influence on subsequent characters such as Mickey Mouse. List of Works: *Feline Follies* (1919)  *The Adventures of Felix* (1919)  *Felix in Hollywood* (1923)  *Felix Finds Out* (1924)  Eats Are West (1925)  Felix Dines and Pines (1927)  *Non-Stop Fright* (1927)  *Felix Woos Whoopee* (1930)  Paratextual Materials:  [Feline Follies](https://archive.org/details/FelixTheCat-FelineFollies1919)  [Felix in Hollywood](https://archive.org/details/FelixTheCat-FelixInHollywood1923)  [Felix Finds Out](https://archive.org/details/FELIXTHECATFELIXFINDSOUT) |
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