



## MAKING MAGIC: 100 YEARS OF DISNEY

# Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

### Thru the Mirror

Director: David Hand [uncredited]  
©: Walt Disney Prod., Ltd.  
a Walt Disney Mickey Mouse  
In: Technicolor  
Recorded by:  
RCA Victor 'High Fidelity' Sound System  
USA 1936 8 mins

### Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

Supervising Director: David Hand  
©: Walt Disney Productions  
a Walt Disney feature production  
Adapted from Grimms' fairytale  
Story Adaptation: Ted Sears, Richard Creedon,  
Otto Englander, Dick Rickard, Earl Hurd,  
Merrill De Maris, Dorothy Ann Blank, Webb Smith  
Sequence Directors: Perce Pearce,  
William Cottrell, Larry Morey, Wilfred Jackson,  
Ben Sharpsteen  
Supervising Animators: Hamilton Luske,  
Fred Moore, Vladimir Tytla, Norman Ferguson  
Animators: Frank Thomas, Les Clark, Dick Lundy,  
Fred Spencer, Art Babbitt, Bill Roberts, Eric Larson,  
Bernard Garbutt, Milton Kahl, Grim Natwick,  
Robert Stokes, Jack Campbell, James Algar,  
Marvin Woodward, Al Eugster, James Culhane,  
Cy Young, Stan Quackenbush, Joshua Meador,  
Ward Kimball, Ugo D'Orsi, Woolie Reitherman,  
George Rowley, Robert Martsch  
Character Designers: Albert Hurter, Joe Grant  
Backgrounds: Samuel Armstrong, Mique Nelson,  
Phil Dike, Merle Cox, Ray Lockrem, Claude Coats,  
Maurice Noble  
Art Directors: Charles Philippi, Tom Codrick,  
Hugh Hennesy, Gustaf Tenggren, Terrell Stapp,  
Kenneth Anderson, McLaren Stewart,  
Kendall O'Connor, Harold Miles, Hazel Sewell  
Colour by: Technicolor  
Music: Frank Churchill, Leigh Harline, Paul Smith  
Sound System: RCA Sound System  
uncredited  
Producer: Walt Disney  
Assistant Directors: Hal Adelquist, Carl Fallberg,  
Mike Holoboff, Ford Beebe  
Animators: John McManus, Hugh Fraser,  
Sandy Strother, Paul Busch, Marc Davis,  
Louie Schmitt, Cornett Wood, Campbell Grant,  
Amby Paliwoda, Riley Thompson  
Animation Special Effects: Andy Engman  
Layouts: Louis Debney  
Movement Model for Snow White:  
Marge Champion  
Movement Model for Prince Charming:  
Louis Hightower  
Voice Cast – all uncredited:  
Adriana Caselotti (Snow White)  
Harry Stockwell (Prince Charming)  
Lucille Laverne (the Wicked Queen)  
Moroni Olsen (the Magic Mirror)  
Billy Gilbert (Sneezy)  
Otis Harlan (Happy)  
Pinto Colvig (Sleepy/Grumpy)  
Scotty Matraw (Bashful)  
Roy Atwell (Doc)  
Stuart Buchanan (Humbert, the huntsman)  
Marion Darlington (bird sounds/warbling)  
USA 1937© 84 mins

With thanks to The Walt Disney Company

Disney turned to the Brothers Grimm for its first animated feature. It's the classic fairy-tale of a Princess who runs away from her vain and wicked stepmother, deep into a forest where she encounters seven eccentric dwarfs. 'Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?' A true musical classic, Disney staked everything he owned on the project. Despite industry expectations that it would fail, the film became a global hit and forever changed the medium.

[bfi.org.uk](http://bfi.org.uk)

Disney's *Snow White* starts with a castle on the hill, foreshadowing *Citizen Kane's* Xanadu. In the latter film, we pass through a window to find a dying man dropping a snowglobe to smash on the floor. But Walt, too, had to show his fantasy world's fragility. In *Snow White's* opening minutes, he presents his sweet princess in a typical cartoon situation, comforting a baby bird. Behind her, a huntsman approaches, face set and eyes fixed. His arm comes up, holding a knife.

And then, of course (of course in hindsight, though it's far less obvious when you're watching the film), the huntsman relents, drops his knife, and lets Snow White flee. 'Everyone in this world was once a child,' Walt told Cecil B. DeMille in a radio talk. 'We grow up, our personalities change, but in every one of us something remains of our childhood... where all of us are simple and naïve, without prejudice or bias. In planning a picture, we don't think of grown-ups and we don't think of children, but just of that fine, clean, unspoiled spot deep down in every one of us.' Snow White, or Rosebud.

'What funny names for children!' laughs the princess when she enters the dwarfs' cottage and sees their miniature beds. Then blobby noses pop up one by one over the bedsteads: 'Why, you're little men!' But she could have been right the first time. The bald-pated dwarfs resemble bearded babes (most nakedly the mute clown Dopey) or Peter Pan's Lost Boys, needing to be told to scrub for dinner or go to bed. Their dialogue is rarely over children's heads; even when they mine for riches, they 'don't know what we dig 'em for.'

Snow White is also infantilised, but Grim Natwick, one of her animators and Betty Boop's designer, wanted a more womanly character who sometimes breaks through in the drawing. The historian John Canemaker flags a scene where she prepares a gooseberry pie. Significantly, she's making it for the misogynist Grumpy, with whom she has the most ambiguous relationship: mother, daughter, or...? Unlike rival cartoons, which thrived on transsexuality (Bugs Bunny) or even bestiality (Tex Avery's anti-Disney *Red Hot Riding Hood*), *Snow White* sublimates such notions, using Prince Charming for that purpose.

Disney also blurs child-adult distinctions, taking startling swings into horror. Few film moments are more deliciously chilling than the evil Queen, her lovely, haughty face reflected in a bubbling glass, breathing, 'Now... begin thy magic spell,' then drinking deep and turning into a monstrous hag. Walt's four-year-old daughter, Diane, bawled at the scene. Nine years earlier, Walt had been relieved to hear audiences chuckling at *Steamboat Willie* (1928), his first sound

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### **Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs + Thru the Mirror**

Sun 2 Jul 13:20; Sat 22 Jul 17:45; Mon 24 Jul 14:20

### **Who Framed Roger Rabbit + Tummy Trouble + Rollercoaster Rabbit**

Sun 2 Jul 15:40; Sat 22 Jul 20:30

### **Disney's Silly Symphonies**

Mon 3 Jul 18:20

### **Splash + Sea Scouts**

Wed 5 Jul 20:30; Mon 10 Jul 18:00

### **Disney at 100**

Thurs 6 Jul 18:15

### **UK premiere of 4K Restoration: Cinderella + Trailer Horn**

Thu 6 Jul 20:30 + intro by season curator Justin Johnson; Sun 9 Jul 12:20; Tue 25 Jul 14:20

### **The Black Hole + Lifted**

Fri 7 Jul 20:50; Sat 15 Jul 13:00

### **Sleeping Beauty + Magician Mickey**

Sat 8 Jul 12:20; Sun 16 Jul 16:00; Wed 26 Jul 14:20

### **The Princess and the Frog + Babes in the Woods**

Sat 8 Jul 12:30; Thurs 18 Jul 18:00

### **Fantasia + Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom**

Sat 8 Jul 15:00; Thu 27 Jul 17:50

### **Fantasia 2000**

Sat 8 Jul 18:10; Sun 30 Jul 10:30

### **Dead Poet Society + Geri's Game**

Sat 8 Jul 20:20; Thu 20 Jul 17:50

### **Alice in Wonderland + Pluto's Party**

Sun 9 Jul 15:30; Thu 13 Jul 18:10

### **Frozen + Frozen Fever**

Fri 14 Jul 20:45; Sun 30 Jul 12:40

### **TRON + Smash and Grab**

Sat 15 Jul 15:10; Fri 21 Jul 18:00

### **TRON: Legacy + Sanjay's Super Team**

Sat 15 Jul 17:45; Fri 28 Jul 20:20

### **WALL-E + BURN-E**

Sat 15 Jul 20:45; Sat 29 Jul 12:30

### **Funday Workshop: Encanto Sing-along**

Sun 16 Jul 11:00

### **Funday: Encanto Sing-along**

Sun 16 Jul 12:30

### **Hocus Pocus**

Sun 16 Jul 18:10; Wed 26 Jul 20:40

### **Moana + Inner Workings**

Mon 17 Jul 18:00; Sat 29 Jul 13:00; Mon 31 Jul 14:20

### **Beauty and the Beast + Tick Tock Tale**

Sat 22 Jul 11:50; Mon 24 Jul 18:05; Thu 27 Jul 14:20

### **Once Upon a Time: A Disney Day**

Sat 22 Jul 12:00-17:00

### **Toy Story + The Adventures of Andre & Wally B. + Luxo Jr. + Red's Dream**

Sun 23 Jul 12:50; Sat 29 Jul 16:00

### **Toy Story 2 + Tin Toy + Knick Knack**

Sun 23 Jul 15:30

### **Tangled + Tangled ever After**

Sun 23 Jul 13:10

### **Pocahontas + Lava**

Sun 23 Jul 15:40; Fri 28 Jul 14:20; Sat 29 Jul 20:40

### **Dinosaur + Get a Horse!**

Sun 23 Jul 18:15

short. Now he'd made a cartoon which – to paraphrase Edward van Sloan in *Frankenstein* (1931), one of *Snow White*'s likely influences – thrilled people, shocked them, even horrified them.

It also made them sob, during the star-studded Hollywood premiere at the Cathay Circle Theatre. *Snow White*'s teary elegy, as the dwarfs mourn her in their darkened cottage, was animated by Frank Thomas. Later he would be known as one of Disney's Nine Old Men; then he was in his twenties. His scene is famously subdued and brief, before the coming of spring and resurrection. But the rest of the film is a grandstanding performance: the posturing Queen, the singing princess, the wildly dancing (and yodelling!) dwarfs. Audience surrogates are constantly on screen, applauding, cowering, sneering (Grumpy grouches 'Mush!' during *Snow White*'s love song) or plain enraptured. Even the Queen glowers from a window, and *Snow White* cringes from bodiless watching eyes in her forest nightmare.

*Snow White*'s legend is festooned by tales of Walt's performances of the evolving story, acting each role from Dwarf to Prince. He himself described showing the unfinished film to a sceptical banker, filling in the missing drawings with his sweat and oratory. Exaggerated or not, these tales suggest, as Neal Gabler argues, a man straining to embody himself in a film he couldn't actually draw. After Walt's death, revisionists argued he was the depthless Prince beside his animators' toiling Dwarfs. Considering *Snow White*'s torturous production, though, the critic Michael Barrier claimed it was 'not a story of how (Walt) Disney's men realised his conception... but of how Disney himself recovered from (his) potentially fatal mistakes and wound up making a much better film.'

For today's audiences, the great mistake may be the heroine's relentlessly winsome cuteness in the first twenty minutes, when she and the animals must carry the action before the Dwarfs appear. But for animators and critics, the debate – as heated now as it was in 1937 – swirls round *Snow White*'s pollution of cartoon with live-action. The film is a fairy-tale, but with realistic textures and illusory third dimensions. When characters proved hard to animate, Disney filmed actors as stilted motion references, the live-action footage guiding the artists. It's plainest with the affectlessly traced Prince Charming, who takes *Snow White* to his cloud-castle at the end. It's as if they're transcending lowly cartoon business, like *Dopey* chasing a soap bar, or Grumpy's halting, thready smile as he stomps away from *Snow White*'s kiss.

Andrew Osmond, *100 Animated Feature Films* (BFI/Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

### Thru the Mirror

Mickey Mouse dreams he is acting out the part of Lewis Carroll's Alice in this ingenious film, which demonstrates several of Mickey's talents as he sings and dances with a pack of cards in true Busby Berkeley style, performs a solo routine and fights off some extraordinary adversaries in a strange world on the other side of his bedroom mirror.

Richard Holliss and Brian Sibley, *The Disney Studio Story* (Octopus, 1988)