

## The Major and Minor Film Studios:

The basic patterns of the film industry (and its economic organization) were established in the 1920s - the studio system was essentially born in the second decade of the century (with long-term contracts for stars, block bookings, and increasingly rigid control of directors and stars by the studio's production chief), and lasted until the late 1940s. The major studios were those that controlled all aspects of a film's development, something called *vertical integration*. They owned their own theatres (about 50% of the seating capacity in the US), as well as production and distribution. The studios distributed their films to a network of studio-owned theaters, mostly in urban areas. By 1929, the firms that were to rule Hollywood filmmaking for the next half-century were the giants or the majors, sometimes dubbed "The Big Five":

### "The Big Five" Studios/The Majors

1. **Warner Bros. Pictures**, incorporated in 1923 by the brothers (Jack, Harry, Albert, and Sam); the studio's first principal asset was *Rin Tin Tin*. The day of the movie czar—Jack Warner being the last of that breed—was long gone when Warner Brothers was taken over by Seven Arts Productions Ltd. of Canada in 1967. Now it is part of AOL-Time Warner.
2. **MGM**, first named Metro-Goldwyn Pictures - in 1924 formed from the merger of **Metro Pictures** (1915), **Samuel Goldwyn Picture Corporation** (1917), and the **Louis B. Mayer Pictures Company** (1918)
3. **RKO (Radio-Keith-Orpheum) Pictures**, evolved from the **Mutual Film Corporation** (1912), went into business in 1928 as a merger of the Keith Orpheum theater circuit (1882), Joseph P. Kennedy's Film Booking Office (1917) and Radio Corporation of America (RCA) (1909). This is the oldest of the continuously operating movie studios.
4. Adolph Zukor's **Famous Players** and Jesse Lasky's **Feature Play** - merged in 1916 to form **Famous Players-Lasky**, spent \$1 million on United Studios' property (on Marathon Street) in 1926, where **Paramount Pictures** henceforth has been located since 1935
5. **Fox Film Corporation**, founded by William Fox, later became **20th Century Fox**, formed through merger of **Twentieth Century Company** and **Fox** in 1935



### "The Little Three" Studios /The Minors

1. **Universal Pictures**, founded by Carl Laemmle in 1912. Today, Universal Studios is part of Vivendi Universal, a global media and communications company.
2. **United Artists**, formed in 1919 by Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., Charlie Chaplin, and D.W. Griffith
3. **Columbia Pictures**, originally the CBC film company in 1920, and officially named Columbia in 1924, with brothers Jack and Harry Cohn, and Joseph Brandt

