

# From Silent to Talkie

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# *Singing in the Rain*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-j8GwkniGrU>



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*From Silent to Talkie: The Rise and Fall of the Cinema*

What characterized the silent art was not that it was put onto celluloid in order then to be projected on a screen; what characterizes a piece of music is not that it is written for the piano or for the orchestra. It's more a matter of a certain internal dream, of an organic pursuit of a certain mode of expression proper to each particular art and unique to it. The silent film's desire (albeit subterranean and stammering) was fairly perceptibly of a catastrophic tendency: to abolish all speech, all logic that supports speech, and all conception of the human which is buoyed up by logic. Those who had come to understand the coded language of silent film took offense at this intertitles; and they found imitative musical sound irritating – this music that was so good at adding supplementary text to what was complete in itself and needlessly duplicating the image (p. 48)

The cultivation of speech, which is inevitable, created gulfs early on between individuals, according to their degree of education and vocation; it even supposes a fairly strong specialization among literate people. In addition, every time speech departs from the real – and it does so every day, by the very act of its existence – it *affirms*. There is no doubt about what it does, about the values that it tends to impose on us (p. 48sq.)

The intertitles already having informed us of the film's true moral value, we lately tried to react, to give this unique medium its veritable subject matter. From this reaction was born the *pure film*, the absolute film, or what have you. The pure film proved infinitely better adapted to the balance of means by the subject; it turned out more intelligible to an audience for whom its literary equivalent will not doubt always remain inaccessible (p. 49)

The talking cinema has to come to replace the silent film, and all our protesting won't do anything about it. Thus we will refrain from protesting. It's not we who have killed the silent film; nor is it we who are creating the talking film; we are not the ones who will kill it ten years hence to replace it with the 3-D film, the color film, who knows what.... (49)

Thus the talking film is born, and nothing can prevent it from existing; it, too, will be sacrifices in its turn. We must take it for what it is. But that doesn't stop us from envisaging its possibilities, and considering whether we can continue to have the confidence in it which we demonstrated (belatedly, of course) in the silent film. Is it capable of maintaining the misapprehension that was so pregnant in the silent film? Can it satisfy our demand for lyricism, and our intellectual needs?  
(50sq)

... some remarks on the **sound film**, twin brother of the talking film but its whipping body.

When the screen is filled by ocean waves and we are made to hear the roar of the real ocean, when an orchestra is seen playing and synchronized sound offers what it's playing, the sound film is duplicating the image, it *speaks*; it immobilizes the image so as not to jeopardize the sound effects; sound follows its older sibling in all respects. Certainly, the sound film isn't used to speech, and it is greatly in its favor, but this is a secondary virtue, a virtue, a virtue made of a lack. However, we should admit that it suggests infinite possibilities; we have seen evident proof in Walter Ruttmann's *World Melody*; we've seen it with the development of the highest order that the sound animated film has undertaken. (p. 52sq)

# *Melodie der Welt*

*Melody of the World* (German: *Melodie der Welt*) is a 1929 German film directed by Walter Ruttmann. It is also known as *World Melody*. The film is structured like a symphony and consists of documentary footage from all over the world, contrasted and juxtaposed to show a number of human activities as they take form in different cultures. There are also staged scenes with actors.

The film was produced by Tonbild-Syndikat AG as an assignment from Hapag. It has an original score by Wolfgang Zeller. It was advertised as Germany's first feature-length sound film.

# *Melodie der Welt*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kLt2dfHBsw>



