Deep Media to Mass Media:
Transitioning from Vaudeville to Film

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Spring 2015

Presented to the Arts & Administration program of the University of Oregon in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master's of Arts in Arts Management

APPROVED: _____ DATE: _____

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ABSTRACT

This research capstone will explore the ways in which vaudeville and early film serve as an example of a preexisting form of media transitioning into a new form of media and how audience plays a role in this transition. Today, administration systems are currently transitioning from analog to digital systems. These platforms change the way people engage with entertainment and the arts. In order to better understand audiences, art administrators must be able to understand the context that surrounds current audiences in the arts management field. This study of the transition from vaudeville to early film is an example of this context and is an important study into what happens to older media with the introduction of new media. These transitions can be seen over and over throughout the last century and give art administrators a look into how to keep arts experiences relevant and audiences engaged in the future.

Introduction

In an economic marketplace that values monetary possessions and quantifiable results to create more monetary possessions, the arts are striving to find a voice amidst the din of a contemporary life. In the field of Arts Management, administrators are constantly working towards making and keeping the arts relevant and widespread. To many, the arts are essential to understanding our society and can sometimes be mirrors reflecting back societal problems that exist in our contemporary cultures. In order to understand the impact and relevance of the arts on any culture, it is imperative that the drivers and organizers of the art field be aware of the contexts and histories behind why art forms exist and how they will change and morph in the future. This is why I propose to examine a time in our artistic history that focuses on a shift from one form of arts entertainment to the next in lieu of technological advancements and how this examination can widen art administrators grasp on how art functions in our society and how it can remain relevant in the future. Arts administrators have the ability to play a huge role in how arts entertainment is experienced and perceived by the public. I would like to look at the transition from vaudeville to cinema and how this transition exemplifies changes from older forms of media to newer forms of media. In the field of Arts Management, understanding these transitions can help keep the arts relevant and pertinent to all audiences.

While examining this transition, the main focus will be on the different structure of each form of entertainment. I will be looking closely at the participatory function of vaudeville and the linear passive function of cinema audiences. According to Frank Rose (2011), participatory audience engagement can refer to what he terms "deep media". The passivity of audiences in cinema can

refer to what he terms "mass media." He explains that "We live in a moment when two modes of popular culture are vying for supremacy: passivity versus participation"(p.98). He further explains that; "Mass media are industrial, manufactured by someone else and consumed by you. The deep-media experience is digital; it offers a way to participate" (p. 98). These "two modes of popular culture" exist in several transitions from older forms of media (communication) to newer forms of media. An early example that addresses the same concern over the participatory versus the passive was the introduction of the serialized novel created in part by Charles Dickens. The novel had just been accepted as a popular form of entertainment. The stress of seeing the novel trumped by a serialized, multi-platform text was frightening. Rose (2011) gives an example from the *North British Review* in 1845:

> The form of publication of Mr. Dickens's works must be attended with bad consequences. The reading of a novel is not now the undertaking it once was, a thing to be done occasionally on holiday and almost by stealth…It throws us into a state of unreal excitement, a trance, a dream, which we should be allowed to dream out, and then be sent back to the atmosphere of reality again, cured by our brief surfeit of the desire to indulge again soon in the same delirium of feverish interest. But now are dreams are mingled with our daily business. (p. 92-93)

This description is very similar to the reviews that films received when they emerged as popular entertainment in the early 20th century. The masses were frightened that the populations would no longer be grounded in reality (everyday life and social interactions) and would submit to the clutches of passivity and a dream like state. Fast forward some years in the future and we see the same dichotomy amidst technological advances. Robert Putnam (2000) uses the telephone as another example:

The history of the telephone reminds us that both utopianism and jeremiads are very likely misplaced. Moreover, it is a fundamental mistake to suppose that the question before us is computer-mediated communication *versus* face-to-face interaction. Both the history of the telephone and the early evidence on Internet usage strongly suggest that computer-mediated communication will turn out to *complement*, not *replace*, face-to-face communities. (p. 179)

The premise for many technological advances comes from our 'face-to-face communities'. The physical world is made up of what the *North British Review* calls our 'atmosphere of reality' and our 'daily business'. Social interactions between human beings are what both of the above quotes focus in on. Once a newer form of media was introduced that trumped the older way of doing things, the public took some time to adjust to and envelop the change that the transition caused. In both the above cases, the fear seemed to be that the newer forms of media would abolish the need to socialize and engage in everyday life with other human beings. Technological advances, that began to flourish during the Industrial Revolution, created machines to replace human labor. The transition from vaudeville to film is good example of a newer form of media (film projector) that slowly enveloped an older form of media (live performance in vaudeville) and very literally replaced human labor in arts entertainment.

Section 1: Histories

In order to understand how older forms of media affect the newer forms of media that technology introduces almost daily, the histories of vaudeville and the introduction of film will need to be addressed and discussed specifically. The discussion of each of these entertainment

structures as individual forms of media will set up a framework of what a transition between old to new media might actually look like.

1:1 A brief history of vaudeville

Vaudeville was one of the first forms of mass entertainment, as we know it today, in the United States. Andrew L. Erdman (2007) explains that, " 'Vaudeville,' after all, according to at least one authoritative historian of the form, means *voix de ville* or 'voice of the city' "(p.31). Vaudeville began sometime in the 1880's and flourished in urban settings around the country. Robert Clyde Allen states that, "Chroniclers of vaudeville characterize the 1890's as the beginning of the golden age of vaudeville's dominance over the American popular entertainment scene. By this time vaudeville was, in the words of McLean, 'itinerant amusement become stable and institutionalized in metropolitan centers' "p. 34). Vaudeville was a variety show. A two-hour show could have ten different acts with no real plot line. This live show was usually curated by the manager of the venue, who hosted the show and featured individual performances that would comprise the two-hour show. Vaudeville's success depended partly on the diversity of the show setup and partly on the pure mass marketing genius implemented by a few key players. Erdman (2007) discusses one in particular:

> Keith (Benjamin Franklin Keith) must have seen that a mass entertainment needed not only to be affordable but diverse as well. Vaudeville's multitude of offerings eventually proved one of the pillars of its marketing strategy; its catchphrase, "something for everybody," was more than a hollow promise. The vaudeville stage was a kind of clearinghouse of late-nineteenth-century popular entertainment. (p. 45)

There were many reasons for the popularity of vaudeville, but the format of vaudeville played a large part in how vaudeville was received by people who frequented shows. The continuous nature and the variety of the spectacle was a draw for many people. The only other competitor for vaudeville was stage theatre. Allen (1980) explains by saying: "But it would have been safe to say that the size of the vaudeville audience surpassed that of the stage theater based on the simple fact that vaudeville theaters ran continuous performances or at least three performances a day, while the stage theater ran two at most"(p. 37). This format became standard practice and is what made vaudeville a popular form of mass entertainment but what also made it less interesting and less of a novelty for audiences that had grown accustomed to a fast paced life in the city.

Like most forms of entertainment, vaudeville was soon to be replaced by a newer form. Film existed during vaudeville's golden age, and it would sneakily participate in vaudeville shows as an unpopular portion of the show. John L. Fell (1983) says that, "By 1898 the motion picture had become established as a staple item in vaudeville shows, although there was a low period when films were uses as "chasers" to force patrons to leave the theaters to make room for the next audience"(p.107). Early film was not as entertaining as what we know now as the narrative film. Most films were documentary style films and showed scenes from nature and documented historical events. There wasn't much variety to be seen in slow paced scenes form nature and the theaters played the same ones over and over. Audiences accepted film as a part of the vaudeville variety show and enjoyed it for the role it played. Allen (1980) states that, "The motion picture was an instant success as a visual novelty act in vaudeville; it was quickly diffused throughout

the United States as such an act, and by the end of that first year (April 1897), it had become a

regular part of many, if not most, vaudeville programs"(p. 124).

The newer media form known as the motion picture would soon overtake and envelop the

vaudeville theaters. Film would use the format of vaudeville to keep audiences involved and

happy and then slowly lure them into a new form of entertainment and change the way a person

consumed media and entertainment. Eventually vaudeville would succumb to the seduction of

film. Erdman (2007) describes the descent: "It was as if vaudeville had risen quickly to

prominence, shone brightly, and then begun to burn through its store of fuel. Perhaps it is

impossible to expect longevity of a form of entertainment that relied so centrally on novelty, on

so many live bodies, and, nonetheless, on such generic standardization"(p. 164). Vaudeville had

become standardized in later years. Benjamin Franklin Keith was mainly responsible for this

standardization. He was a businessman with a very strategic plan. He used marketing to draw

audiences in and to allow audience members to feel as if their opinions about performers

mattered. He encouraged heckling and engagement with other audience members and he also

encouraged interactions with performers. However, towards the end of vaudeville's popularity,

he was the man making the decisions and who decided who would perform, in what order and at

what theater. The vaudeville product was a highly planned out orchestration done primarily by

one man. Erdman (2007) describes the demise. " Though vaudeville in the United States would

continue in some form or another for two more decades, with numerous attempts, usually by old,

out of work vaudevillians, to bring back the glory days of the form, the vaudeville era, in a real

sense, was gone by 1918"(p.164).

Vaudeville was an entertainment platform that depended on tactile relationships and human interactions in order to be successful. Audience members participated and decided the fate of performers. Robert W. Snyder (1989) describes that, "At the end of the show, the survivors were lined up onstage. The master of ceremonies walked down the line of them, holding a five-dollar bill over each performer's head. The one who received the loudest applause won the money"(p. 100). Fell (1983) explains that, "The industrial structure of vaudeville did not call for a division of labor in the usual sense. Rather, the division came within the vaudeville presentation itself: each act was merely one of eight or more functional units, one cog in the vaudeville machine"(p.152). Fell describes vaudeville as a subject of parts. Each part was essential to make the whole production. His reference to a machine is telling and can easily explain why the transition from vaudeville to film was fairly seamless:

> Hence it is not surprising that a machine would quite literally replace the acrobat, animal act, or magician on vaudeville bills. Neither did the use of films in vaudeville require a division of the industry into distinct production, distribution, and exhibition units. In fact, it favored the collapsing of these functions into the "operator," who, with his projector, became the self-contained vaudeville act. (p.152)

The live performances of what made the vaudeville show so compelling, were replaced by an 'operator' and a machine. The machine replaced the original machine like structure of a vaudeville show and gracefully usurped what once was a very popular and engaging form of arts entertainment.

1:2 A brief history of film

Vaudeville was the precursor for film for many reasons. The first similarity can be observed in early film showings and how they mimicked the continuous format. Patrons were allowed to come into the theater at any point during the day and be able to catch a short silent film without having to attend a specific showing. Film serials used heroes and heroines to engage audiences week after week and keep them coming back for more from the same entertainer/actor/actress. This was much like vaudeville and mimicked the model of the variety show comprised of individual personas that represented each performer in order to attract audience members week after week with a new act. Mostly importantly, vaudeville provided the platform for the easy emergence of film. Film showings were done in vaudeville theaters in the beginnings and many of the same strategies used to market a variety show were initially used to market film as the newest form of entertainment. Erdman (2007) elaborates, "Vaudeville, which had provided the first mass venue for the commercial projection of motion pictures, now saw itself defeated by the seed it had planted"(p. 164). Looking at the transition from vaudeville to cinema, it's easy to see how much was borrowed from vaudeville.

Film depended on an audience presence but didn't require live performances and the uncertainty of human behavior. Film allowed for entertainment to be rehearsed and representational. Film became completely standardized to perfection and easy to reproduce over and over. The emergence of film was highly dependent on vaudeville and urban entertainments. Before film was introduced to the vaudeville stage there were some significant inventions that helped to catapult film into the public's eye. The kinetoscope came out in 1893. Daniel J. Czitrom (1982) describes the ascension of this new technology:

Previewed at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago during the summer of 1893, the

kinetoscope could handle only one customer at a time. For a penny or a nickel in the slot,

one could watch brief, unenlarged 35-mm black-and-white motion pictures. The

kinetoscope provided a source of inspiration to other inventors; and, more importantly, its

successful commercial exploitation convinced investors that motion pictures had a solid

financial future. (p.38)

Not too far behind this invention, the vitascope was soon introduced to audiences. The vitascope

was the next step and was the first movie projector. The vitascope could project images and light

onto a large screen or wall for many people to view at once. The modern film audience was

created. Apparently, according to Tino Balio (1976), "Its appearance came just in time, perhaps

because by then the novelty of the Kinetoscope was wearing off. Kinetoscope business, in fact,

began to decline in 1895 and showed no signs of resurgence by the time the first projector

appeared"(p. 4). As already discussed, film got its start in vaudeville, but it also appeared in

nickelodeons and penny arcades. Czitrom (1982) describes the phenomenon by explaining that,

"Some arcade owners bought, rented, or built their own projectors; they then partitioned off part

of the arcade for screening movies. They acquired films from vaudeville managers who

discarded them"(p.40). Nickelodeons were the third place that helped developed what we now

know as modern cinema. These were similar to the penny arcades and initially depended on the

kinetoscope.

The change over form vaudeville to film was gradual. The nickelodeon introduced the concept of

film and was the first business venture that looked to the vaudeville theater's venue spaces to

display their new craft. Balio (1976) narrates the descent of vaudeville. " Just as, five years later,

movie exhibitors would use the legitimate theater as a guide to learn how to exhibit feature films, so, in 1908, nickelodeon owners preyed on vaudeville houses for methods of exhibiting movie shorts"(p.72). Soon after, movies became an instant success, aided by the platforms created by the mass entertainment that came before it. Erdman (2007) says that, "By 1910, some 26 million Americans were going to the movies at nickelodeon theaters every week; in New York alone, the weekly figures amounted to between 1.2 million and 1.6 million"(166). The change over from vaudeville to film with the kinetoscope and vitascope in the middle is an example of a major shift in media and mass entertainment. Technology gave audiences something new to watch, something that was less human and easier to mass produce and distribute. The newer form of media in the guise of film created a consumer audience that wasn't required to participate in order to create a successful show. Cinema was introduced as what we now know as mass media and entertainment. The audiences were passive in comparison to a participatory vaudeville show. The transition from vaudeville to cinema presented, "an instance of inter-media symbiosis and competition." Fell (1983) elaborates on this symbiosis:

> The emergence of film in late nineteenth-century America was closely tied to the mass theatrical entertainments from which it was launched as a business and as a mass art. Film's incorporation into the vaudeville program and eventual eclipse of vaudeville by the 1920's presents an instance of inter-media symbiosis and competition. These inter-media relationships in the decades around the turn of the century should be viewed within the greater context of the nineteenth-century evolution in industrial production and business management. (p. 176)

This transition or "emergence" as Fell describes, is crucial to how we currently understand new media and how we view film as a collective audience in a modern society. The structures of each

form of entertainment were revealing in how they pandered to audiences before and after this transition. The upcoming sections will address the narrative structure of film and the nonlinear structure of vaudeville and how both of these forms still exist in different ways today as forms of new media.

Section 2: The narrative film versus the nonlinear vaudeville

Classical Hollywood Cinema was a time from around the late 1920's to the early 1960's, when film was based heavily on the narrative form. Fell (1983) explains the scholarship behind the development of Classical Hollywood Cinema:

> French scholars speak of transparent cinema (Andre Bazin), narrative-representative cinema (Chrisitan Metz, Dominique Noguez), continuous narrative style, and linear cinema. Each expression partially accounts for characteristics of narrative form that transform the screen into a transparent frame, providing its audience with a seemingly unmitigated access to reality. A characteristic of the form is its capacity to reproduce subject matter within a pattern of logic consistent with the logic of the world it records, excluding whatever elements might serve to break the narrative flow. The exposition frequently proceeds from linear pattern which arranges the basic elements in a chain of indispensable, intentional links, all operating to further the plot. (p. 312-313)

Vaudeville used a completely different model of operation compared to what we all know now as narrative film. There was no real continuity in vaudeville or consistency in how a variety show functioned, and in most cases, if not all, there was never a plot. A description of the pattern

of how vaudeville used to operate in current literature, and in reference to the way the internet works today is given by Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly (2003). "Associative linkage, argues Bush, replicates more accurately the way the mind works. The continuing appeal of hypertext as both information storage and creative methodology has been that it appears to offer a better model of consciousness than linear storage systems" (p. 25). Vaudeville operated more like associative linkage or hypertext that is " made up from discrete units of material in which each one carries a number of pathways to other units. The work is a web of connection which the user explores using the navigational aids of the interface design"(p. 24). Each separate act connects to the others to make up one product or 'interface design.' Classic film operates more as a 'linear storage system.' According to the above quote, the mind works similarly to navigating a website. Our eyes and minds move from place to place in order to create a whole picture or a better and complete understanding of the subject being consumed. Vaudeville operated in the same way. The variety allowed the mind to jump from place to place and still consume the product of the 2-hour show in one sitting. Classical Hollywood cinema was dependent on the mind following one route in order to get to one conclusion or resting point. In the following sections, I'd like to explore how vaudeville exemplifies this hypertext, non-linear theory and how early film and its path to Classical Hollywood cinema followed a more narrative, rigid structure and how each of these structures influenced and changed audiences.

2:1 Associative linkage, hypertext and vaudeville

Vaudeville was a model for how we consume our entertainment now and may be the structural premise for how our minds work when we sit in front of a computer. I will refer to this

structure as "hypertext" or "nonlinear". Frank Rose (2011) introduces the idea: " Clearly the idea of branching, nonlinear narrative has lodged itself in our brains. But has our consciousness been warped by hypertext? Or is hypertext a product of our consciousness- a natural representation of the way we think?"(p.116). Technology is a creation of the human mind and imitates the mind's functions. The mind operates in associations, according to Vannevar Bush, who was a leading American technocrat of the World War II era. Bush was years ahead of his time and his ideas were the premise for what Ted Nelson would later call: hypertext. Bush was concerned with how the human mind would deal with "our bewildering store of knowledge"(p.106). Rose (2011) quotes him as arguing against indexing systems and how they were insufficient to the task of dealing with large amounts of information because, "The human mind does not work that way. It operates by association. With one item in its grasp, it snaps instantly to the next that is suggested by the association of thoughts, in accordance with some intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain" (p.106). Ted Nelson, a graduate student at Harvard in 1965, " combined Bush's idea of associative trails with digital technology to imagine embedded links that would enable readers to hopscotch from one text to another to another " (p.108). Fell (1983) argues that vaudeville is similar to a machine in the way each act bounces off of each association to the other, and he explains this in reference to Frederick E. Snyder, a well known vaudeville historian:

> Frederick E. Snyder argues that while the vaudeville act itself was a non-mechanized popular art, the format for assembling the acts into a unified performance bore a resemblance to machine structure, as the photoplay for film continuity would a decade or so later. The vaudeville act was a discrete interchangeable unit in a system of eight or nine acts. Resembling a specialized machine component, it was performed three ties a

day, six days a week for as many weeks as the circuit lasted...The vaudeville performer

presented entertainment of a pre-industrial nature but in an industrialized format. (p.181)

The word 'discrete' is an indication and reference to what we use to describe digital processes.

Discrete numbers are what make up programming languages and create the Internet. Vaudeville

was made up of 'discrete' acts that became one large performance piece. Even in the way the

vaudeville circuit operated was very mechanical.

The audience played a part in the structure of vaudeville and consumed this form of arts

entertainment by hollering and encouraging performers and 'clicking the mouse' if you will, in

order to be taken to a whole new form of visual entertainment via a link. Rose (2011) states that,

" hyperlinks have given rise to a 'link economy'-the product of an emerging realization that in a

world defined by the Web, value resides not so much in information as in links to the bits of

information that are most relevant and enlightening"(p. 110-111). There were also many players

and participators for vaudeville, or hyperlinks if you will. Every show was different. Robert W.

Snyder (1989) explains that, "The mainstream of popular culture clearly had its lures for the

vaudevillians, but not because they were in a rush to become bland articulators of a homogenized

mass culture. They flocked to vaudeville because it was a capacious arena that could

accommodate and reward many different performers"(p. 43). Vaudeville operated by association

and the audience responded and participated in all the different associations that each performer

represented.

Each new act is representative of a piece of the whole system or a link to a different part of the

same website and everybody can be a star as long as the audience approves, on an online

platform or in a vaudeville theater. Allen (1980) adds to this argument by saying that, "The establishment of this framework was a long process of refining the means by which the order and substance of elements of the vaudeville program could be used to manipulate and feed the expectations and desires of the vaudeville audience"(p. 48). The vaudeville structure was more accessible to more people by presenting a product that operated continuously and in a non-linear pattern. If a person were to walk in to a vaudeville theater off the street at any time during they day, they wouldn't miss out on anything. The story was not continuous and so therefore not dependent of an understanding of the narrative as a whole because there was no narrative to follow. David Nasaw (1993) describes this in detail:

> To make his show a bit more inviting and to attract the scores of passersby who were skirting his museum on their way to nearby offices, department stores, hotels, and legitimate theaters, Keith experimented in 1885 with what he called the "continuous." Instead of emptying the stage after each performance, he kept the show going, bringing the opening act back on stage when the final one exited. As Keith knew from his days with the circus, nothing attracted a crowd like a crowd and nothing was so depressing as an empty house. "Continuous" performances guaranteed that he would have an audience all day long. (p. 20)

This continuous, non-linear method of presentation was crucial to the long time success of vaudeville. The audience had options and were not limited by time and space the way that audiences today are with a 2-hour long narrative film that demands a definite start time and ending time.

The continuous structure of vaudeville was even taken a bit further and this is where artist

programming comes into play. Benjamin Franklin Keith would set up the order of performers

based on what he knew about audiences and how they would react and what would keep them

interested for the full performance. He would start the show with a "dumb act" that wasn't too

special so as not to deter people who would be arriving late and then he would introduce a

second act that would be what Erdman (2007) regarded as " anything more interesting than the

first act," (p.53). He would then plan the show according to common audience behavior. The

third act would "settle" the crowd and then the fourth would "wake" the crowd and then the fifth

and sixth would be two big name performers and then there would be an intermission. After

intermission, the acts would go down in quality so as not to take away from the headliners and

then lastly they would show silent films in order to get the audiences to leave the theater because

they were so boring (Erdman 53). All of these steps were seen as separate but part of a whole and

intentionally placed for audience consumption.

Film was at first the ending credits to a vaudeville show. As new technology was being

developed in film, the film industry was looking for venues and ways to display their new art

form. Before the Classical Hollywood cinema genre, film had to behave at the behest of the most

dominant form of entertainment of the time, which was vaudeville. Silent film was utilized much

like a short act in vaudeville and could easily fit into the continuous format. Nasaw (1993) says

that:

> Screened films, projected by vitascopes, eidooloscopes, cinematographes, and biographs,
>
> fit perfectly into the vaudeville program. "Dumb" acts (animals: puppets: pantomimists;
>
> magic lantern slides; and "living pictures," or tableaux vivants) had traditionally opened

and closed the show, because, being silent, they would not be disturbed by late arrivals or

early departures. The movies, the managers now discovered, were ideal dumb acts: They

cost less than live performers, didn't talk back or complain about the accommodations,

and could be replaced weekly. (p. 147)

The vaudeville theaters were breeding grounds for early cinema. Film needed a stage and

vaudeville offered that as long as it complied with the continuous and non-linear format. But as

soon as film became something more complex and the vitascope emerged, the vaudeville format

no longer suited the needs of the film industry. The newer media of film changed mass

entertainment in urban settings and usurped the older form of media, known as the vaudeville

variety show.

2:2 Early film and the narrative structure

The format and structure of the associative linking and continuous, non-linear formatting

transformed into something wholly different with the emergence of silent films, film serials and

classical film. Current cinema and many periods of film in the past depended on a narrative flow

mainly controlled by the author or creator. The narrative flow is linear and guides the audience

through the story by following a straight line. Mary Ann Doane (2002) suggests that the

transition from the vaudeville structure to that of the narrative structure, emphasized the

importance of time. The late 19th century standardized time for the railroads and Doane suggests

that narrative cinema was a way to control time:

The problem the cinema must address early in the century is precisely its ability to record

singularity. The cinema confronts the difficult task of endowing the singular with

significance, of manufacturing an event in a medium designed to record, without

predilection, all moments. It is not surprising, from this point of view, that the cinema

embraces narrative as its primary means of making time legible. Despite the dominance

of the actuality in the first decade of the cinema, despite the extensive fascination with

the camera's relation to "real time" and movement, narrative very quickly becomes its

dominant method of structuring time. Born of the aspiration to represent or store time, the

cinema must content itself with producing time as an effect. (p.67)

Early films that were included in vaudeville shows were usually 'actuality films' or what we now

call documentary films. The early silent films were far less elaborate and showed scenes from

everyday life. The first filmmakers were fascinated with the everyday moments in life that could

be captured on film and shown again and again in the future. The cinema narrative was the

'dominant method of structuring time' in a 19th and early 20th century culture newly acclimated

to the standardization of time. Doane (2002) states that: "Although there is some debate about

the precise timing of the transition, it is clear that sometime between 1902-1907 the popularity of

actualities declined and narrative films began to take precedence in the various studio

productions" (p.142). The plot of a film became the main focus, which was extremely different

from the intentions of vaudeville. Audiences watched the story and followed the narrative as

designed by the film's director. The plot was guided by visuals. Early film was more non-linear

and less concerned with the narrative, and this was most likely done to fit into the vaudeville

structure. The narrative format has become acceptable and mainstream in films but even now in

current culture, there is a tendency for the human mind to consume media in the vaudevillian

way as discussed above in reference to hypertext and associative linking.

Section 3: Branding vaudeville and film

Vaudeville and film learned how to market their product expertly within an urban setting. Vaudeville paved the way and cinema followed and improved upon already tried and true practices. The way in which each discipline was marketed to the public played a huge role in how it was received, perceived and consumed. The urban setting gave each of these art forms access to thousands and thousands of consumers all in one place who were trapped within a bustling urban spectacle, seduced by pleasures and the celebrities of mass entertainment. The way in which vaudeville was branded and executed was a significant precursor to the arrival of film as the next new big thing in entertainment and mass media. Film could not have so seamlessly trumped vaudeville as the most popular form of entertainment without the structure that vaudeville had created with the successful execution of the vaudeville brand. Once vaudeville was standardized it became prey to a newer form of media. Standardized entertainment was easier to pin down and copy because of the preexisting model that existed before it. This can be seen in vaudeville and with the introduction of film.

3:1 The vaudeville brand

After the industrial revolution, the city setting changed rapidly. Never before had so many people been in one place. Vaudeville capitalized on this and catered to the public's preferences and backgrounds. Keith and Albee were the two masterminds behind the vaudeville aesthetic and they were well aware of their audiences. They knew about religious influences and understood that many consumers were immigrants who wanted to be entertained but may not

have the language yet. Erdman (2007) explains the focus on cleanliness and consistency. Keith

and Albee knew inherently that, "The discourse of cleanliness and purity, whether applied to the

content of staged entertainments or the physical plant itself of Keith theaters, proved the perfect

means of illustration that an amusement could be massive in scope and yet altogether in the

careful, caring control of competent professionals"(p.49). This was not all the Keith did in order

to insure the success of vaudeville. He also created the structure and format of how vaudeville

operated as entertainment. "To lure in patrons in greater numbers, Keith experimented with a

format he called 'continuous.' Rather than bringing down the curtain and darkening the house

between shows, Keith simply brought the first performer on the bill back on stage again and

started all over"(p.46). What is significant about this is that he watched and understood his

audience and then created a system that would intrigue and interest them and cater to their

whims. Erdman (2007) expands on this:

> Apparently, Keith had learned from his circus days the truism that "nothing attracted a
>
> crowd like a crowd," in the words of one expert on the history of popular amusements.
>
> The advent of continuous performance was a significant development in the history of
>
> vaudeville, not because it was an unqualified success- indeed, Keith still struggled to
>
> make ends meet- but because it showed Keith searching to find a formula that would
>
> appeal to the urban masses he hoped to attract. (p. 46)

In many ways, it can be easy to see how Benjamin Franklin Keith was one of the very first

successful art administrators. Keith knew that he had to create a brand for vaudeville so that it

could reach the large amount of people milling through the city on a daily basis. Erdman (2007)

explains that, "The emergence of the "brand," as an historically unique phenomenon, both

shaped and reflected the growth of business on a national scope and scale, and pertains directly

to the development of vaudeville" (p.63). Magazine and newspapers were the vehicles used to

distribute this brand. The branding system allowed consumers to feel confident about the

products they bought and consumed amongst a bevvy of options that surrounded them on a daily

basis. One of the specifics of vaudeville branding was the cultivation of the celebrity or star.

Performers in vaudeville were used to lure in customers and create a brand and face for

vaudeville as a product. Vaudeville had taken an audience's interests and created a machine of

entertainment that gave something to everyone. Erdman concludes that, "By the 1890's, though,

it had taken on a shape all its own and coalesced into a corporate-controlled, centrally managed,

standardized form of mass entertainment- among the first species of mass entertainment in the

modern, consumerist United States"(p. 163). Vaudeville had become a standardized machine

with a variety of acts and a singular reputation. However, this expert branding of vaudeville

created a cohesive and consistent system that gave film a structure to infiltrate. In many ways,

this move to a more structured and organized sensibility, gave control to one entity (Keith),

instead of allowing for the fluidity and creativity of the hypertext structure that made vaudeville

so compelling to begin with.

3:2 The film brand

        The cinema took the torch that vaudeville carried and ran it even further. Film moguls

understood the star/celebrity power even better than the vaudeville circuit. Stars appealed to

everyone, and each and every person who lived in a city could find something to relate to in a

movie star. Nasaw (1993) explains:

>The stars not only were bringing new customers into the theaters, they were incorporating a movie audience scattered over thousands of different sites into a unified public, a public that not only saw its favorite pictures but talked about them, read about them, collected their pictures and posters, and bought fan magazines to learn more about their personal lives and loves. Stars were, by definition, actors or actresses whose appeal transcended every social category, with the possible exception of gender. (p. 197)

Similar to vaudeville, film used all different kinds of marketing platforms to sell their product and engage the masses. After awhile, films began to concoct formulas for their films, which was also similar to vaudeville. Vaudeville's formula was in the structure and programming of several acts to create one experience and film's formula wasn't much different in the beginning. This basic formula began with film serials, which were very much like television shows. Film Serials were short episodes that were shown weekly to audiences. People could keep up with the characters and starts of these film serials through newspapers and magazines. If you missed an episode at one theater you might be able to catch it at another or find out what happened in the newspaper. Kalton C. Lahue (1968) elaborates on how these marketing practices were executed for these film episodes:

>After the initial episode had been shown, Heiman spoke briefly to his audience of children and then handed out cards to be punched for each episode attended. A completely punched card entitled the bearer to a ticket for a Daniel Boone Outing. His financial gain was small on the first chapter, but the promotion brought in many new patrons for the remaining chapters. Other theaters would admit a patron to the final episode free of charge, providing his card was punched for every previous installment. (p. 132)

People were enticed to come back over and over again. The audiences were the fuel behind the popularity of film serials and the way in which films serials were marketed was very similar to the variety show of a vaudeville stage. William C. Cline (1984) explains that, "The basic ingredients of a good serial-already clearly ordained in the silent form- consisted of a Hero, a Heroine, a Villain, his Henchmen, a Prize, and the Perils. These were mandatory"(p. 4). Vaudeville also had some of these similar aspects in each of the acts that performed. People knew what to expect in both vaudeville and early film and in film serials in particular. The branding was essential to the survival of both of these spectacle based art forms and entertainments. The beginning of each individual form of entertainment relied on the spectacle or element of surprise and the novelty of the representation. Vaudeville accomplished this by allowing a variety of performances created by individual performers, and film accomplished this by revealing a lit up screen that told a cohesive narrative in a dark room that could be seen over and over again without any human error. The major difference in each brand was the audience's reaction and involvement.

Section 4: Emphasis on participatory communities and or audiences

Today, with a culture that is more media based than ever and more dependent on computers and the Internet, social interaction and participation has come up as a point of discussion in academic circles. There are many people who believe that the more time we each spend in front of a computer screen, the less time we will spend socializing and building communities. Charlie Gere (2008) calls this an 'atomized society' and he also suggests, "that with new digital media and networks we are either glimpsing the emergence of a new

'participatory culture' of greater cooperation or solidarity, or alternatively our digital culture runs the risk of producing a pandemonium of competing media noise, self promotion and meaningless disembodied interaction, in an increasingly atomized society"(p.222).

The Internet has the potential to bring more people together as communities but may also alienate people who have become accustomed to consuming media in their homes and in front of screens. Robert Putnam (2000) explains this in terms of commercialized technology by saying that, "The commercial incentives that currently govern Internet development seem destined to emphasize individualized entertainment and commerce rather than community engagement. If more community-friendly technology is to be developed, the incentive may need to come from outside the marketplace" (p. 179). The inventions that fueled film as a consumable product, created a huge economy for the entertainment industry to flourish within. The standardization of the format also created a mass media marketplace that reached millions of people who passively consumed the popularized product. Viewing a film did not and does not require live performance or participation. Vaudeville encouraged community engagement that was fueled by audiences.

Today, vaudeville is not part of what society terms mass media and communications. Vaudeville today exists in localized places in smaller communities as a recycled product created by nostalgic communities. The current concern now is that screens and strictly visual forms of entertainment are taking out the social aspect and creating atomized lives and distance between peoples. This distance is capable of cultivating a culture without empathy or intuitive inclinations. So now, instead of moving from a more participatory culture in vaudeville to a more passive viewer culture in film, we are transitioning to a participatory culture from the passive viewer syndrome.

4:1 The vaudeville show as participatory culture

Vaudeville encourages participation. The structure of it depended on an active audience and groups of people in one place to enjoy it to create energy and interest. Erdman (2007) discusses this in comparison to our current habits:

> In its own way, vaudeville was also more fully a public entertainment at a time when urban Americans were seeking out new and pleasing ways to spend their leisure dollars. They did so in the company of fellow urbanites in locales that placed them together en masse and in close proximity. Thus, vaudeville was much more a mass experience than are the movies today, many of whose consumers will watch them in the privacy of their own homes on DVD or cable. (p.167)

Vaudeville encouraged public participation and an involvement with others in order to enjoy oneself and be entertained. This urban setting was crucial to cultivating the emphasis on social behavior and mass entertainment.

Vaudeville itself depended on the participation of audience members. The stage was extremely close to the audience and Stephen Kern (2003) describes that, " It was on the same level as the audience, and there were no curtains or footlights to accent the difference between actor and audience" (p.200). Everyone just had a role to play and part to perform whether they were an actor or participating audience member. "Cabaret performers themselves sometimes dines at the surrounding tables, then rose from among the customers to do their routine, and between numbers patrons were encouraged to dance on the stage-turned-dance-floor"(p.200).

The variety of the vaudeville show was created by this format. Drinking and talking and heckling performers was part of the fun and meant to create the lively environment and increased the appeal of being out and about in the city after a day of working in an austere factory in a stale setting. Vaudeville was a change from the higher end theaters that hosted formal plays, and encouraged silent audiences. Vaudeville encouraged the opposite. Nasaw (1993) describes the change:

> While the women might have taken off their hats in the auditorium and the boys softened their cheers and jeers, few vaudeville patrons behaved as if they were in church or school. The "restraint of emotion in the theater," which Richard Sennett has identified as the hallmark of the middle-class audience, was not only absent but also actively undermined in the vaudeville theaters. Instead, vaudeville provided its patrons with the opportunity to display their emotions in public. (p. 33)

Vaudeville went even farther and was more than participatory, it was dependent on audiences and the audience shaped the quality of the entertainment. Richard Butsch (2000) explains, "And yet managers relied upon the outspoken audience for vocal approval of good acts. Historian Alison Kibler notes how vaudeville slang suggests the institutionalized expectation of a strong audience response. "Riot" described a successful act; an audience "killed" an act, or it "died," getting no reaction from the audience; an act "drew blood," meaning enthusiastic applause"(p. 116).

The audience had their own rating system, which is very similar to how some Internet platforms work. Computer users are encouraged to rate restaurant experiences and comment on videos posted on YouTube. There are also many incidents that involve online ridicule and policing for

bad behavior online. The hacking collective, Anonymous, polices and regulates the Internet trolls who give "bad performances" or "perform atrocious acts on stage or online." The audience regulated and judged in a vaudeville performance much like people do now on online platforms. Vaudevillian performers booed off the stage by the audience had to come up with a new act in order to keep performing in theaters successfully. The audience members created the market for vaudeville performers. Each theater audience that booed or cheered a vaudevillian performer was a collective community of people amassed in one place within a larger city or setting.

The vaudevillian communities were much like online communities that we see occurring now on the Internet. Communities are formed and become active audience members in entertainment settings and in virtual realities that exist within an Internet setting. Robert Putnam (2000) explains how this works:

> "Dan Huttenlocher, professor of computer science at Cornell, argues that digital technologies are adept at maintaining communities already formed. They are less good at making them." If the primary effect of computer-mediated communication is to reinforce rather than replace face-to-face relationships, however, then the Net is unlikely in itself to reverse the deterioration of our social capital. (p. 180)

Vaudeville was a community already formed and was easily translatable and usable for the transition to film as a new entertainment technology. The active physical space of vaudeville would soon be used to display realities that lived in screens and required no audience participation.

4:2 Film and the passive audience

With the transition from vaudeville to film as the primary form of urban entertainment in the early 20th century, there was a change in what was expected of the audience. Film allowed for a more private experience in public. There was still the draw of being in public with hundreds of people who were also there to consume this newer media, but the dependency on audience participation was gone. The viewer was meant to be silent and absorb the visuals on the screen. Loudness and chatter were not tolerated as the years passed and films developed audio tracks for each motion picture. The viewer became silent as the films became talkative. Film could show an audience close up pictures or far away scenes. Czitrom (1982) says that, "The close-up 'objectified in our world of perception our mental act of attention,' and thereby gave art 'a means which far transcend(ed) the power of any theater stage' "(p.57).

Film editing created different experiences for the viewer and the movie became something for personal meditation and a 'mental act of attention.' Czitrom goes on to explain how the different techniques in editing did different things to a person while they watched a film. "The cutback (flashback) paralleled the close-up by objectifying the mental act of remembering." (p.57). The visual effects of a film were what made the art form interesting to audiences. The experience of watching a film was a much more mentally engaging process that didn't require any physical exertion.

 Part of what made film enticing was that it was different from vaudeville and that it appealed to a different sense; the internal sense of being that each human being has. Vaudeville was blatantly about the physical experience and the appeal to carnal and social senses. The film projector tamed the vaudeville experience and created something austere but visceral. Czitrom (1982)

expands on this and calls it; "This inner division, this awareness of contrasting situations, this interchange of diverging experience in the soul, can never be embodied except in the photoplay" (p.57). According to Czitrom, film used different angles, close ups, long shots and lots of other editing techniques in order to draw the audience in without involving them directly in the process of creating the film. In the early days of film and in the media projections that were a part of the vaudeville experience, film tried to appeal to audiences in more interactive ways because the films were short and silent. As film progressed, added audio to their pictures and extended the average time of the film, the product changed its approach. Film was transcendent, thoughtful and trained audiences how to think in narrative plot lines while reading into a camera's movements and intentions. No experience was the same for each person because every viewer understood the story and visuals differently. People were encouraged to be solo while consuming entertainment in public and learned to discuss their opinions of the film's "performance" in spaces outside the theater instead of within.

Section 5:Vaudeville and film in the 21st century

For many people, the introduction to the ever-changing technological landscape fueled by the Internet, creates a virtual space that allows for an existence in isolation. The transition from vaudeville to film foreshadows this move to virtual spaces from physical spaces, with the introduction of new technology and newer forms of media. The virtual spaces we live in are often a reflection of our physical spaces. Putnam (2000) elaborates on this concept:

On the other hand, we should not romanticize the heterogeneity of the real-world communities in which we now live. "Birds of a feather flock together" is a folk adage

that reminds us that tendencies toward community homogeneity long predate the Internet.

Whether the possibility of even more narrowly focused communities in cyberspace will

turn into reality will depend in large part on how the "virtual" facet of our lives fits into

our broader social reality, as well as on our fundamental values. (p. 178)

What does our society value? Are we social creatures who crave social interactions and physical touch? Do 'our tendencies toward community homogeneity long predate the Internet'? In many ways, the hypertext format of vaudeville can be seen in modern practices. The Internet allows for associative linking in virtual spaces as vaudeville allowed for associative linking in physical spaces. Another term to describe this is transmedia. Henry Jenkins is well known for his work in defining transmedia. Pamela Douglas (2015) interviews Jay Bushman, who is a writer and producer of media. He describes transmedia thoroughly:

I approach transmedia from a different perspective. I use multiple channels, multiple

formats, multiple media, and have each piece part of a larger whole but none of the

individual pieces stands alone. So it becomes a multimedia experience where you get part

of the story here but you have to switch to another place to get another part. By putting

all those individual pieces together you create something larger than the whole. It's a

singular experience. (p. 193)

This description could be a description of the vaudeville structure. Each channel could be a performer on a stage that functions as part of a whole experience. Film has become a more controlled form of entertainment with a few key players who manage and direct large companies and create standards for a homogenized product that can be consumed by millions of people at once. For mass media and film, the individualized, smaller niche audiences are not as important as marketing to larger audiences. The vaudeville aesthetic was created by individual creative

endeavors and allowed for more individualized forms of expression created by unique

performances. The Internet currently allows for many different platforms that give small stages

to many different kinds of performers who cater to many types of smaller audiences.

Pamela Douglas discusses the move to smaller audiences in her latest book, *The Future of

Television*. "On the Internet where 'real estate' is cheap or free, anyone can make a series and

post it no matter how few people are likely to follow. Cable shows cost to produce and require

some sort of backing, usually from advertisers, so even niche-specific channels need enough

viewers. But 'enough' has become a shrinkable bubble" (p.61). The creator has more options for

promotion and distribution that cost less than producing and being a part of a large blockbuster

film.

Internet users have more control and can produce creative pieces independent of a movie theater.

Cory Doctorow explains that, " The Internet is making it possible for more people to write more

stories, make more movies, and record more songs than ever before. It is making it possible to

have deeply personal, moving, and entertaining experiences in new ways" (p.151). Eric

Raymond also explores this open structure in speaking about open source programming. Open

source programming is when software is developed in a collaborative effort to be used for free.

The free software is also improved upon and altered by Internet audiences. According to

Raymond (1999), there are two main ways to program. He describes that software 'needed to be

built like cathedrals, carefully crafted by individual wizards or small bands of mages working in

splendid isolation, with no beta to be released before its time'(p.24). This 'cathedral' method of

creating software is highly organized by a select group of programmers fueled by the market

economy. This cathedral example mirrors the structure of a popular narrative cinema scene, which uses a few key players to produce a controlled product.

The more collaborative vaudeville scene can be explained in the second example of programming. Raymond explains that it is, "No quiet, reverent cathedral-building here-rather, the Linux community seemed to resemble a great babbling bazaar of differing agendas and approaches (aptly symbolized by the Linux archive sites, who would take submissions from anyone) out of which a coherent and stable system could seemingly emerge only by a succession of miracles"(p. 24). This second example of computer programming resembles how a vaudeville stage might function. The effort to produce one cohesive product is created by several amateur or professional programmers who perform and create because they want to. The comparison between the two is similar to the narrative linear structure of film in comparison to the associative linking of the vaudeville aesthetic.

Conclusion

Technology is constantly changing and creating jobs within arts entertainment. In the field of Art Management it becomes important that we understand how and why this happens. By looking at transitions from one form of popular entertainment to the next, art administrators will be able to see similarities amidst the changes and be more able to confront the challenges of what it means to be a facilitator of art. Above, I have tried show how important the transition from vaudeville to early film really was by giving brief histories of vaudeville and early cinema and by studying the structure and format of each form of arts entertainment. Vaudeville mirrors a

nonlinear, hypertext, associative linkage structure that mimics how we consume media today online. Early film mirrors a narrative, linear structure that mimics how we read a book and how we consume mainstream film today. The marketing strategies for both vaudeville and film were strikingly similar in the early stages of the transition. Early film depended on the already in place success of the vaudeville structure, the vaudeville venue and the vaudeville audiences. Vaudeville was dependent on a participatory structure and engaged audience members. Early film began with a slightly participatory focus but quickly encouraged a more passive audience and an emphasis on a narrative form heavily reliant on one creator or vision. The introduction of the Internet and online consumption has changed how we, as consumers and audience members, enjoy arts entertainment. In many ways, niche markets, audiences and smaller communities are the new norm. Smaller communities are exploring more specific kinds of media on all different kinds of platforms and stages. In a sense, the structure is similar to vaudeville with many different performers and a variety like setup. The narrative, controlled structure of early film and mass media is moving over for a more vaudevillian structure that encourages many players in smaller arenas. Deep media is the new, but yet old structure, that I am seeing emerge in the 21st century.

As arts administrators, we have a responsibility to understand the economic situation that the arts exist within. Audience members no longer exist only in theaters. We exist behind computers, in theaters, in our cars and in our homes. We are constantly engaging in media and entertainment. Open and public spaces for entertainment are no longer as prevalent but the structure of our arts entertainments are. José van Dijck explains this:

> In contrast to some other parts of the world, Western culture has decreasing public space in which social and creative activity can take place; corporate and nonprofit organizations fill this zone. In more than one respect, online sociality mirrors offline sociality- a realm where the boundaries between for-profit, nonprofit, and public space are porous, but an implicit hierarchy dominated by market forces inevitably defines the conditions for development. (p.152)

Our online "sociality mirrors offline sociality", which shows important it is for art administrators to understand how audiences are engaging in media from day to day and from century to century. The vaudeville structure is alive and well in our "online sociality" and reflects how important it is for human beings to be a part of engaging and participatory communities that encourage individual creativity.

Definitions

Audience: in extended use: those people who admire, support, or take a consistent interest in a particular person, area of artistic activity, idea, etc.; (also) those people who are regarded as likely to be interested in such a person or thing

Cinema: cinema films collectively, esp. considered as an art-form; the production of such films. Also, material suitable for presentation in or as a cinema film

Entertainment: A public performance or exhibition intended to interest or amuse

Hypertext: Text which does not form a single sequence and which may be read in various orders; *spec.* text and graphics (usu. in machine-readable form) which are interconnected in such a way that a reader of the material (as displayed at a computer terminal, etc.) can discontinue reading one document at certain points in order to consult other related matter.

Linear: Resembling a line; very narrow in proportion to its length, and of uniform breadth

Narrative: an account of a series of events, facts, etc., given in order and with the establishing of connections between them; a narration, a story, an account

Non-linear: Not based on a linear, unidirectional structure; random; *spec.* with reference to a literary text, etc.

Participatory: characterized by, relating to, or involving participation; (of a form of art or entertainment) that allows members of the general public to take part

Passive: that is acted upon or is capable of being acted upon from outside; that is the object of action; affected by external force; produced or brought about by external agency

Media: the main means of mass communication, *esp.* newspapers, radio, and television, regarded collectively; the reporters, journalists, etc., working for organizations engaged in such communication. Also, as a count noun: a particular means of mass communication.

Sensational: Of works of literature or art, hence of writers: Dealing in 'sensation', aiming at violently exciting effects. Also of incidents in fiction or in real life: Calculated to produce a startling impression

Spectacle: a specially prepared or arranged display of a more or less public nature (esp. one on a large scale), forming an impressive or interesting show or entertainment for those viewing it

Transitional: of or pertaining to transition; characterized by or involving transition; intermediate

Vaudeville: A play or stage performance of a light and amusing character interspersed with songs; also without article, this species of play or comedy. Now in frequent use in the U.S. to designate variety theatre or music hall

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