SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS vs. TANGLED

Lilian Ho
301068262

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KJ Lee
TA: Lanz Singbeil
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937) was Disney's first feature film, while Tangled (2010) was their 50th animation. Both these stories were inspired by fairytales written by the Grimm Brothers, and feature a female as the main character. As these movies were released 73 years apart, the technology used for animating were clearly very different. However, both these movies pushed the boundary in terms of what existed technologically during the production years.

Before Snow White, Disney had found success with a number of short animations featuring Mickey Mouse, and some found the idea of a full feature animation film laughable. However, Disney proved its critics wrong when the film was widely embraced for its “landmark status” when it was released in 1937 (Telotte, p. 247). One of the things it was applauded for was the ground-breaking method used to achieve a realistic effect - the multiplane camera.

Invented by William Garity at Walt Disney Studios, the multi-plane camera was made to be used for Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (“Cinema: Man and Mouse”, 1937). The layers move independently of each other at different speeds, which creates a three-
dimensional effect. Each plane contains different sections of the final frame, as well as transparent sections so that the layers below can be seen. This technique allowed animators to create realistic shots. One example is slowly zooming in on a character. As the camera moves closer to the layers, the focus on the different layers shifts and imitates a real life effect as if the characters and scenery existed physically and three-dimensionally.

Tangled, on the other hand, was produced in an era where the technology existed to create very photorealistic images. However, Glen Keane, the animation director, had a vision for Tangled. He wanted them to go back to their cartoon roots, and wanted the look of a traditional hand-drawn Disney classic. While he didn’t eschew the use of computers completely, he believed that he could make the computer create “organic, hand-drawn feel characters” (Desowitz, 2010). The final look of Tangled was purposefully not photorealistic and very cartoon-like. However, subsurface scattering and global illumination was used to create very rich environments.

Because of these demands by Keane, the process of the animation focused on fluid and intuitive movements from the very beginning. They started with a story sketch,
showing how each character would roughly move at different points and their stances as well as facial expressions. Then, a rough animation was made for the movements to ensure that they were fluid and believable. The next step is unique to Tangled - the hair simulation. A team was created just to focus on the animation of Rapunzel’s hair. Lastly, all these different layers were put together and the hair and clothes were finalized.

Although Snow White and Tangled were created 73 years apart, they were both created with a vision and did not allow technological restrictions to stand in the way. The results were two successful movies with captivating storytelling which appealed greatly to its viewers.
References


Telotte, J. P. (2007). The changing space of animation: Disney's hybrid films of the 1940s. Animation, 2(3), 245-258. doi: 10.1177/1746847707083419 Link http://sfu.summon.serialssolutions.com/link/0/eLvHCXMuVVOxDSiwDMwHGGHmA5HqpNjxjKh4QD9wqdxRif8LP2KAxZInb7476c506RqSQMEBH1G7-4QSrlSAyiqlEP7MsT_bfDmdXms92f_gHlmzTNNoiTBxcutuMFr3vMWH4q6xqSJxKgXlb5s5uinFxExEy6ETfyXeiSThh28df7iJXZB6mJ_g