

T I M E L I N E



The 1990s

1990

- 10 JANUARY Time Inc. and Warner Communications Inc. merge to form TimeWarner.
- 11 FEBRUARY Anti-apartheid activist and African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela is released from prison in South Africa after being incarcerated for more than twenty-seven years on charges of “terrorism.”
- 15 APRIL Glamorous, beautiful, and reclusive Swedish screen star Greta Garbo (*Grand Hotel* [1932], *Queen Christina* [1933]) dies.
- 2 AUGUST Iraq invades and conquers Kuwait.
- 7 AUGUST Operation Desert Shield begins, and the first U.S. forces—F-16 Eagle fighters from Langley Air Force Base, Virginia—arrive in Saudi Arabia.
- 3 OCTOBER Germany is reunited for the first time since the end of World War II, less than a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall.
- 13 NOVEMBER The first known web page is written.

1991

- 16 JANUARY The U.S. government authorizes the use of military force to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi president Saddam Hussein’s invasion. Operation Desert Storm and the first Persian Gulf War begin on 17 January with air attacks on Iraq.
- 3 MARCH Amateur video captures the beating of taxi driver Rodney King by four Los Angeles police officers after King is stopped for a traffic violation.
- 13 AUGUST The Super Nintendo entertainment system is released in the United States.
- 3 SEPTEMBER Beloved American director Frank Capra (*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* [1939], *Meet John Doe* [1941], *It’s a Wonderful Life* [1946]) dies.
- 15 OCTOBER Clarence Thomas’s nomination to the Supreme Court is confirmed after bitter Senate Judiciary Committee hearings in which former employee Anita Hill accuses Thomas of sexual harassment.

- 25 DECEMBER Soviet president Mikhail S. Gorbachev resigns, ending seventy-four years of communist reign. On 31 December the Soviet Union officially ceases to exist.

1992

- 16 JANUARY El Salvador officials and rebel leaders sign a pact in Mexico City, ending a twelve-year civil war that killed at least 75,000.
- 29 APRIL Violence and looting erupt in Los Angeles after four white police officers are acquitted in the beating of Rodney King. Fifty-eight people are killed with nearly \$1 billion in damages within five days.
- 22 MAY Johnny Carson retires from “The Tonight Show” after thirty years as its host.
- 24–28 AUGUST Called the costliest storm ever in the United States, Hurricane Andrew devastates south Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi.
- 3 NOVEMBER Arkansas governor Bill Clinton defeats incumbent President George H.W. Bush and independent H. Ross Perot in the U.S. presidential election.

1993

- 26 FEBRUARY Terrorists connected to Osama bin Laden park a van containing a bomb below the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Six people are killed and more than a thousand are injured in the blast.
- 27 FEBRUARY Screen legend Lillian Gish (*Birth of a Nation* [1915], *Broken Blossoms* [1919], *Night of the Hunter* [1955], *Whales of August* [1987]) dies.
- 28 FEBRUARY The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms raids the compound of the Branch Davidian religious sect near Waco, Texas, with arrest warrants for cult leader David Koresh on federal firearms violations. An exchange of gunfire results in the deaths of four agents and six Branch Davidians. A fifty-one-day siege by the Federal Bureau of Investigation follows. Attorney General Janet Reno orders a final FBI assault on 19 April. A fire set by sect members destroys the complex, and seventy-six people, including women and children, perish.
- 25 MARCH The final episode of the popular television show “Cheers” airs.
- 30 APRIL The World Wide Web is born in Geneva at the Organisation européenne pour la recherche nucléaire (CERN).
- 9 SEPTEMBER Viacom acquires Paramount Communications for \$10 billion.

- 17 NOVEMBER After a bruising political battle, the United States ratifies the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), allowing for free trade between Canada, the United States, and Mexico, thereby forming the largest free-trade area in the world.

1994

- 7 MARCH The Supreme Court rules in *Campbell v. Acuff-Rose Music* that parodies of an original work are generally covered by the doctrine of fair use.
- 7 APRIL Rwanda erupts in genocidal ethnic strife. In the next 100 days, between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Tutsis are killed by Hutu militants.
- 12 JUNE Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman are murdered outside O. J. Simpson's home in Los Angeles.
- 1 SEPTEMBER The Independent Film Channel (IFC) begins broadcasting unedited, uncensored, and commercial-free independent films to an initial audience of one million satellite and cable viewers.
- 14 OCTOBER *Pulp Fiction* is released by Miramax. Aided by the studio's skillful marketing campaign, Quentin Tarantino's provocative writing and directing, and a talented cast, the \$8 million movie grosses over \$200 million worldwide.
- 8 NOVEMBER Led by Georgia congressman Newt Gingrich, soon to become Speaker of the House, the Republicans win control of both houses of Congress for the first time in forty years.
- 19 DECEMBER An investigation into the real estate dealings of Bill and Hillary Clinton and their associates in the Whitewater Development Agency in the 1970s and 1980s begins.

1995

- 19 APRIL Former U.S. Army veteran Timothy McVeigh and fellow militia member and friend Terry Nichols bomb the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168.
- 15 JULY Amazon.com is launched.
- 16 OCTOBER The Million Man March, led by Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, brings hundreds of thousands to Washington, D.C. The event is designed to increase black participation in voting and to support welfare, Medicaid, housing programs, student aid programs, and education programs.
- 4 NOVEMBER After attending a peace rally, Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin is mortally wounded by a right-wing Israeli fanatic.

- 21 NOVEMBER *Toy Story*, the first feature-length film created entirely using computer-generated imagery, is released.

1996

- 29 FEBRUARY The Sundance television channel is launched. A film that had opened the 1995 Sundance Festival, Richard Linklater's *Before Sunrise*, is its first major feature.
- 3 APRIL The target of the most expensive manhunt in the FBI's history, "Unabomber" suspect Theodore Kaczynski, is arrested for killing three people and injuring twenty-three others in sixteen bombings beginning in the 1970s.
- 5 JULY Dolly the sheep is the first mammal to be successfully cloned.
- 27 JULY A bomb explodes in Centennial Olympic Park during the Olympic Games in Atlanta. Two people are killed and over one hundred are wounded.
- 27 SEPTEMBER Moslem fundamentalist Taliban militia capture Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, and begin imposing Islamic law.
- 5 NOVEMBER Bill Clinton and Al Gore are reelected as president and vice-president. The Republicans retain control of Congress.
- 26 DECEMBER Six-year-old beauty queen JonBenét Ramsey is found murdered in her family's basement in Boulder, Colorado.

1997

- 1 JANUARY U.S. television networks adopt ratings systems for their programming similar to those used for motion pictures.
- 19 MARCH The first DVD titles are released in the United States.
- 1 MAY Led by Tony Blair, the Labour Party routs the Tories in the British election, ending eighteen years of conservative rule.
- 30 JUNE The first book in the *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling is published.
- 4 JULY The *Pathfinder* space probe explores the surface of Mars. A webcast of the event is seen by over one million viewers.
- 31 AUGUST Diana, Princess of Wales, is killed in a Paris car crash together with her companion and lover Dodi Al-Fayed and their driver Henri Paul. Diana's funeral on 6 September is viewed by over one billion people worldwide.
- 19 DECEMBER James Cameron's *Titanic* is released, starring Leonardo di Caprio and Kate Winslet as star-crossed lovers. The film will set all-time box office records, raking in \$7 billion in the U.S. and Canada alone.

1998

- 27 MARCH The first drug treatment for male impotence, Viagra, is approved by the Food and Drug Administration.
- 14 APRIL The online DVD rental company Netflix begins U.S. operations.
- 7 AUGUST U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, are bombed by terrorists with links to Osama bin Laden, killing 224 people and wounding over 4,500.
- 7 SEPTEMBER Google is founded as a privately held corporation by two Stanford University Ph.D. students.
- 19 DECEMBER President Clinton is impeached in the House of Representatives for misleading the American public regarding his relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

1999

- 1 JANUARY A common European currency, the euro, is introduced.
- 20 FEBRUARY Influential film critic Gene Siskel dies from complications during brain surgery.
- 20 APRIL Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris kill thirteen and wound two dozen before committing suicide at Colorado's Columbine High School.
- 7 SEPTEMBER Viacom Inc. announces plans to acquire CBS Corporation for \$36 billion in the largest media merger ever.
- 12 OCTOBER The world population reaches six billion.
- 20 DECEMBER The Vermont Supreme Court legalizes same-sex unions.
- 31 DECEMBER Millennium celebrations begin worldwide (although technically the millennium starts in 2001, not 2000). Concerns of serious Y2K computer system failures are rife but little of note happens.

American Cinema of the 1990s



Terrified student filmmaker Heather Donahue (Heather Donahue) confronts the unknown in the woods in *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, Artisan Entertainment, 1999). Digital frame enlargement.