Burt Gillett

Playful Pan

United States (1930)

TAGS: Arcadia Pan





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Playful Pan
Studio/Production Company	Walt Disney Productions
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	None (silent movie)
First Edition Date	1930
First Edition Details	December 27, 1930, distributor: Columbia Pictures, black and white, silent animation with music by Bert Lewis.
Running time	6 min 56 sec
Format	VHS, DVD
Date of the First DVD or VHS	1986 (VHS: (365V) and Beta (365B); Walt Disney Cartoon Classics Vol. 13: Silly Symphonies: Fanciful Fables); 2006 (DVD: Walt Disney Treasures: More Silly Symphonies Volume Two)
Genre	Animated films, Mythological fiction, Silent films
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Creators



Burt Gillett , 1891 - 1971
(Animator, Director)

Mostly known for his work in Walt Disney Productions in the 1930s. (He directed the famous *Flowers and Trees* in 1932 and the short *Three Little Pigs* in 1933, among others, for both of which he won Academy Awards for Short Animation). He started to work for Disney in 1929 as the second professional animator from New York City. Throughout his career he struggled with many problems with different production companies and got famous for his eccentrics (he changed his name with last name several times). After his Oscar success, he transferred to the Van Beuren Studios, where he directed (inter alia) shorts with Molly Moo-Cow and Felix the Cat.

Source:

Smith, Dave, ed., “Burt Gillett” (entry) in *Disney A to Z: The Official Encyclopedia*, 4th ed., Glendale: Disney Books, 2015.

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Additional information

Adaptations

We might consider *Peter Pan* from 1953 to be inspired by this short, but the story is far too different – the only connection would be the name of the main character and its classical roots.

Summary

As it is a short animation with no dialogues in it, the story has no elaborate content. The plot centers on the god of nature – Pan – who dances with plants and animals – brought to life by his magical flute. The party includes the whole world – also the sky and clouds on it, they start to dance with such intensity that it produces a lightning bolt. It strikes the tree and starts a fire. The trees that before danced with smiles on their faces, now are burning and turn to ashes. Scared flora and fauna try to stop the fire but their efforts are in vain. Animals raise an alarm and turn to Pan for help. He, after seeing the catastrophe he caused inadvertently, lures the flames to a nearby pond by playing again on his flute. The forest is in peace again.

Analysis

An interesting and old-school example of using mythological motifs in modern culture.

The author creates a new story (unknown to classical mythology) to characterize one of the Greek gods – Pan. His best known features and symbols are preserved. His look is similar to descriptions known from mythology. Pan has hindquarters, legs and horns of goat. He is using his instrument (Pan's pipes) to control nature. Only his association with sexuality is ignored as such themes are typically taboo in children's movies.

Here we deal with more of an animal-like creature (Pan is a satyr). Other humanoid creatures do not appear in the animation, only animals and plants that celebrate life and nature with their god. He – after indirectly causing the fire – takes responsibility for his actions and rescues his subjects. He is not like Peter Pan from James M. Barrie's story: here we encounter Pan as part of the mythical forest. Although he is still playful (as the title suggests), he uses the playfulness to fix his mistake and bring back the balance, as a true guardian of nature should.

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	As Walt Disney Production often did in its short animations, a motive from classical tradition was turned into a slapstick joke. “Silly Symphony” series served as an experimental platform for the company, to test colour and movement. This animation was no exception.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Arcadia Pan
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Emotions Nature Obedience Values
Further Reading	Bradley, Edwin M., *The First Hollywood Sound Shorts, 1926–1931,* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009. Cavalier, Stephen, *The World History of Animation*, Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2011. Meritt, Russel and J. B. Kaufman, *Walt Disney’s ‘Silly Symphonies’: a companion to the Classic cartoon series*, Gemona, UD: La Cineteca del Friuli, 2006. Smith, Dave, ed., “Burt Gillett” (entry); “Playful Pan” (entry) in *Disney A to Z: The Official Encyclopedia*, 4th ed., Glendale, CA: Disney Books, 2015.
Addenda	Silent movie, no translations needed.

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