

We do not hear the first words, spoken in film, at the beginning of this 1927 movie. That happens later - after we have experienced what silent movies were like. In the first talking picture, we actually transition from the old to the new.

The story is about a young Jewish boy's struggle to follow his own dreams. His father, a cantor, wants his son (who has a beautiful voice) to be a cantor. The boy (Jakie Rabinowitz) does want to sing - but he wants to be a jazz singer.

In this clip, the young lad follows his heart - to a New York saloon where he entertains the patrons. Found out by a family friend, the boy is punished by his father. Thereafter, he decides to leave home so he can pursue his own dreams.

Jakie's childhood environment, from an historical standpoint, is remarkable because we are able to see authentic street scenes. This was the Jewish part of New York City at the time the film was made.

We do not hear the first words spoken by an actor in film until after Jakie Rabinowitz has transformed himself into Jack Robin, the jazz singer. The first words are:

Jack Robin: Wait a minute, wait a minute, you ain't heard nothin' yet! Wait a minute, I tell ya! You ain't heard nothin'! You wanna hear "Toot, Toot, Tootsie"? All right, hold on, hold on ...

When Warner Brothers authorized this film, the company was in financial trouble. One step away from legal receivership - never a great option for any business - the studio's executives decided to invest in the Vitaphone sound system.

It was a significant gamble. What if the public didn't like "talking pictures?" What if such films became "box-office bombs?"

"Don Juan" was Warner's first film with sound. It wasn't a "talking picture," though. It was a silent film featuring some sound effects and music.

Then, in 1927, the studio used a Broadway hit - "The Jazz Singer" - to launch a new genre of movies. Al Jolson - a much-loved musical entertainer of the day - would be the movie's star.

The risk which Warner Brothers took, with the film industry's first talking movie, paid-off significantly for the studio. Audiences liked the film. Everyone realized that talking films had the capacity to entertain and to generate significant revenue.

"The Jazz Singer" was so successful that it played to full houses for months. Box-office receipts helped Warner Brothers to turn-around the company's finances (and business operations). The studio transformed itself from a shoestring operation to a hit-producing factory.

Credits:

Clip from The Jazz Singer

Premiere: October 6, 1927 - in New York City

Directed by Alan Crosland

Play written by Samson Raphaelson

Adapted for the screen by Alfred A. Cohn

Warner Brothers

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/The-Jazz-Singer-First-Talkie-Film0>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/The-Jazz-Singer-First-Talkie-Film0>