



Filmcorp Group, Inc.

January 28, 1987

Mr. Jay B. Cunningham
City Planner
City of Culver City
9770 Culver Blvd., Rm. 208
Culver City, CA 90232-0507

Dear Mr. Cunningham,

The letter agreement dated September 5, 1986 between MGM/UA Communications Co. and the Filmland Corporate Center regarding the leasing of space in this building includes the provision that the tenant will receive the exclusive right to signage at the top of the building and/or top spandrel. Such sign(s) will be subject to the Landlord's reasonable approval and the City's approval. The agreement further provides that the sign existing over the MGM Studio, or a duplicate thereof is deemed approved the the Landlord.

The final details of the actual lease have not yet been finalized and executed. However, Filmland Development, Inc. expects fully to conform to the above terms and any action now required can proceed on this basis.

Very truly yours,

Filmland Development, Inc.
dba Filmland Corporate Center
by Filmcorp Group, Inc., Agent

O. R. Hardison

O. R. Hardison
President

cb

RECEIVED
CULVER CITY
PLANNING DIVISION

JAN 28 1987

MGM/UA Communications Co.

450 North Roxbury Drive
Beverly Hills, California 90210
Telephone: 213 281-4010

Telex: UNARTISCO BH 183-558
Fax: 271-4698

Stephen D. Silbert
President and
Chief Operating Officer

February 5, 1987

THIS PROPERTY LOCATED
WITHIN THE WASHINGTON-CULVER
REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT
RECEIVED
CULVER CITY
PLANNING DIVISION

Mr. Joseph Montoya
Associate Planner
9770 Culver Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90230

Dear Mr. Montoya:

Regarding Filmland, plans have been presented to you for the structural reinforcement of the roof steel and installation of stub ups to accommodate the eventual placement of the MGM sign on the roof.

We understand that formal approval of the erection of the sign has not yet been given and your approval of the structural reinforcement and stub ups in no way commits the City of Culver City to the eventual approval of the sign itself.

We understand that if such approval is not eventually received, we will, within 60 days, remove the stub ups and reseal the roof, returning it to its original condition.


Sincerely,

MGM/UA COMMUNICATIONS CO.


Stephen D. Silbert
President

By signature below, Filmland Corporate Center agrees that MGM/UA Communications Co. may proceed as indicated above.

FILMLAND DEVELOPMENT INC.
dba FILMLAND CORPORATE CENTER
by FILMCORP GROUP INC., AGENT


N. P. Popich
Chairman and CEO

cc: Rocco Sorreto

midnight March 15.

Culver City *Times* 3-5-87

Council to Meet on MGM Sign

The City Council has scheduled a special meeting to consider a proposal by MGM/UA Communications Co. to place the historic Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer "Leo the Lion" sign atop the eight-story Filmland Corporate Center.

The council set March 16 as the meeting date at the urging of MGM, which has asked the city to amend a law protecting the 54-year-old sign from alteration without council approval.

MGM officials have said they want permission to move the sign as soon as possible so they can proceed with the sign's unveiling. The dismantled sign is stored in a building in Boyle Heights.

MGM removed the roof sign last year from the company's former Culver City studio without the city's permission, according to City Atty. Joseph W. Pannone. The city decided not to prosecute after MGM agreed to apply to the city to relocate the sign, Pannone said.

The Planning Commission approved the application on Feb. 25 but required MGM to reduce the height of the sign, perform a shade-and-shadow study and give Culver City "first right of refusal" to buy the sign should MGM leave the city.

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Studios Given the High Sign

Culver City Approves Three High-Rise Logos

By JEFF BURBANK, *Times Staff Writer.*

Remaining true to its town motto—"The Heart of Screenland"—Culver City has approved signs proposed by three large film companies based in the city.

The City Council approved roof signs of Lorimar Studios and MGM/UA, both of which display the companies' corporate names and logos. The Redevelopment Agency approved a plan by the Gannett Co. to install a sign with the new Laird International Studios name: "The Culver Studios."

The council's decision Monday allows Lorimar to install a three-part sign on the roof of a sound stage. The sign includes a panel that will advertise the company's films and television shows.

The Planning Commission recommended last month that the council not allow Lorimar the title panel.

But a Lorimar official told council members that the company needed the title panel to remain competitive with other studios seeking business from independent producers.

"These people continually ask us to allow their film titles" to be placed on the sign, said Irwin Molasky, a company executive and one of Lorimar's founders. "Potential independent producers expect this display. If we tell them they can't, they might go elsewhere, to [20th Century] Fox or Burbank [Studios]."

Molasky said the title panel "is not to sell tickets" but to "let the creative community know that these productions are being done in Culver City . . . to show that this is 'The Heart of Screenland.'"

Lorimar will be permitted to place three panels where MGM once had its sign, on top of a sound stage bounded by Madison Avenue, Washington Boulevard, Culver Boulevard and Overland Avenue. Along with a panel displaying film titles, the sign will include the company's corporate logo and name.

MGM/UA was allowed to move its 62-year old "Leo the Lion" sign and add it to a 103-foot-long "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer" sign to be placed atop the Filmland Corporate Center, MGM's new corporate location in Culver City.

Last November, MGM removed its sign, a historical landmark, without permission from the city. Lorimar in turn placed its sign where MGM's previously stood, also without

SIGN

Continued from Page 1

consulting the city.

Both Lorimar and MGM violated the law in not seeking approval for the sign changes, according to the city attorney who said he would not prosecute because they applied for permission later.

MGM was asked by the commission to consider scaling down the sign atop Filmland from its proposed 163-foot height above the street. MGM then lowered the sign to 160 feet. City Planner Jay Cunningham said that if the sign were any lower, it could only be partially seen from the street.

The MGM sign will not contain a film title panel. The council's unanimous vote for Lorimar and MGM/UA was another step in the relocation of the film giants after the sale of the historic MGM Studio lot to Lorimar-Telepictures last year. Lorimar produces its own films and television programs on the lot and leases out some of its sound stages to independent producers.

Laird, located at 9336 Washington Blvd., became The Culver Studios on Tuesday after it was sold to Gannett.

Please see SIGN, Page 9

3-19-87

MGM Sign Dedication

Photo Caption



The MGM Sign was moved from its original location atop the Wardrobe Building to Stage 6 (pictured above) in the early Thirties; it overlooked production activities at the famous studio lot for more than sixty years.

Designated "a sign of historical significance" by Culver City, this Southern California landmark has been completely restored and was relighted atop the company's new Filmland Center headquarters on June 11th in a ceremony attended by MGM's legendary Leo the Lion, MGM/UA Chairman & CEO Lee Rich, and MGM star Gene Kelly.

(6/11/87)

MGM/UA Distribution Co.

11111 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angeles, California 90025
Telephone: 213 444-1500



June 17, 1987

Ms. Lupe Smith
Culver City Historical
Society
P.O. Box 3428
Culver City, CA 90230

Dear Lupe:

You will find attached a press kit that was distributed last Thursday for the MGM Sign Dedication Gala. The event, as I am sure you are aware, received newspaper coverage worldwide and was covered by 16 television crews. You will find attached copies of the front page photos and stories in the Hollywood Reporter and The Daily Variety.

I am sure you agree the relighting of the MGM historic sign was a major media event for the "Heart of Screenland," and all of us at MGM/UA Communications look forward to continuing a close relationship with you and the City of Culver City.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Ted Hatfield', written over a horizontal line.

Ted Hatfield

TH:dc

Attachments



Contact: Dawn McElwaine
(213) 280-6116

**LEO LIGHTS UP SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
Entertainment Rex Unveiled Atop MGM's
New Home Amid Gala Fireworks Display**

MGM's Leo the Lion returned to the Southern California skyline last Thursday night (6/11) during a spectacular ceremony held to relight the heralded MGM sign at the world-famous movie company's new Culver City headquarters.

MGM/UA Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Lee Rich, screen and television star Gene Kelly, and Culver City Mayor Dick Brundo joined invited guests as well as MGM/UA staff members for the glittering celebration, which began at 7:30 p.m. with a cocktail reception in the multi-storied glass atrium of the glamorous Filmland Center.

At 8:40 p.m., Leo's guests were escorted to the building's Madison Avenue motor court, where they reviewed an honor guard including the colorful Culver City High School dance and drill teams. Remarks from Lee Rich, Dick Brundo and Gene Kelly followed before the guest of honor -- Leo the Lion -- arrived at the dedication platform, escorted by his trainers and Miss Culver City.

At approximately 9:00 Lee Rich and Gene Kelly pushed a plunger, triggering a brilliant cascade of fireworks that climbed Filmland's tiered balconies in rapid succession. The two and a half-minute shower of sparks culminated when MGM's landmark sign -- displaying the classic rendering of Leo himself and the movie company's traditional motto, *Ars Gratia Artis* -- was illuminated in spotlights and neon atop MGM's new home for the first time.

MGM's cameras captured the spectacular sign-lighting ceremony from the ground as well as an airborne helicopter. The Filmland Center's state-of-the-art multi-media center presented a stunning glimpse of the ceremony on its stadium-size high-resolution television monitor as guests returned to the atrium for coffee and dessert.

(6/15/87)

BRINGING LEO TO FILMLAND A History of the MGM Trademark and Sign



One of the world's most well-known trademarks was born in the imagination of a young man determined to make good at his first job.

In 1916, young Howard Dietz had just been hired by the Phillip Goodman Agency in New York, after leaving Columbia University during his senior year. He was quickly handed one of the advertising agency's toughest assignments – to create a trademark for the then-new Samuel Goldwyn Pictures Company.

After toying unsuccessfully with several ideas, Dietz decided to "borrow" the reclining lion figure from Columbia University, which had first adopted the King of Beasts as a symbol in the days it had been known as Kings College. After adding a few touches of his own, including a pair of torches, he presented a sketch to Sam Goldwyn.

"I like that cat," Goldwyn reportedly said. "Call him Leo and make him a little more artistic around the mane." Recalling a motto recited constantly by his Latin professor, Dietz scrawled "Ars Gratia Artis" (Art for Art's Sake) across the layout, and a trademark was born.

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MGM's trademark was not the first screen symbol to grace the Culver City skyline.

Constructed by Thomas Ince in 1915, the famed lot originally displayed a familiarly shaped sign: a circular Ince logo above a long panel containing the production facility's original name, Triangle Studios.

The Triangle sign stood atop the Wardrobe Building, overlooking what is now the lot's Washington Blvd. parking area, until the studio was purchased by Goldwyn Pictures in 1918.

•

When Metro Productions and Goldwyn Pictures joined together under the leadership of Louis B. Mayer to form Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Leo was quickly selected as the on-screen replacement of Metro Pictures' parrot, who had frantically tossed the letters in the company's name all over the screen.

•

Artist Morris Rosenbaum is credited with executing the now-classic design of the MGM trademark. Familiar to millions of moviegoers around the world, it features a roaring Leo encircled by ribbons of movie film, above a laughing muse and laurel wreaths. According to historical records, the trademark was first used on July 25, 1924; although the date of the sign's debut has not been similarly documented, it is present in photographs of the studio lot dating to 1927.

The U.S. Patent Office first registered the traditional MGM trademark on August 16, 1927, along with a recording of Leo's roar -- one of the very rare instances in which a sound has been registered by the Patent Office for a company's exclusive use.

•

In the beginning the MGM sign featured the familiar face of Leo and two rectangular panels: one bearing the name Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the other with the word Studios (spelled in the classic Roman manner, with a V in place of the U). Initially located atop the studio's Wardrobe Building, the MGM sign was relocated to a higher vantage point following completion of the 95' 10" tall Stage 6 in 1930. In all, the MGM sign overlooked the studio's famed sound stages for more than sixty years.

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Modified slightly over the years for structural and aesthetic reasons, the basic design of the MGM sign has never been altered. One such modification was removal of the panel bearing the word Studios, which was replaced by a panel used to display the titles of current MGM films.

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Restored over the course of two months in 1987, the MGM sign is supported atop the Filmland Center on five 37' tall steel columns, each weighing in at nearly 2,700 lbs.

Approximately 105' 6" in length at its longest point and 21' 6" high at its tallest point, the sign itself weighs an estimated 16,000 lbs. The Leo section is 15' tall, 32' wide, and 3,000 lbs. in weight; the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer panel is 105' 6" long, 6'6" high and weighs 13,000 lbs. In all, total weight of the MGM sign and its supporting columns is estimated at 29,500 lbs. -- nearly 15 tons.

The top of the MGM sign now reaches a height of approximately 160', measured from the ground floor of the Filmland Center. For aesthetic reasons, the newly-restored sign will not include a panel displaying titles of current MGM films.

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Leo now has his own typeface, according to Heath and Company, the firm responsible for restoring and reinstalling the historic MGM sign atop the world-famous movie company's new headquarters in Culver City.

While preparing to restore the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer panel, Heath's experts discovered that the classic style of lettering originally used could not be found in any existing type book.

Thus was born "Metro Roman," which currently contains fourteen letters -- those used in the words "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer" and the company's well-known motto, "Ars Gratia Artis."

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The MGM sign was installed on the roof of the Filmland Center with the help of a Bell UH-1 Helicopter, and a 220 ton crane with a 400' long boom -- believed to be the tallest mobile heavy-lifting device west of the Rockies.

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Heath and Company originally estimated that 1600 man-hours would be required to reassemble and install the sign atop the Filmland Center -- yet the work went so smoothly that they now estimate it required only 800 man-hours. More than a dozen workers were involved in the installation over a two and a half week period.

Planning and preparation activities at Heath required over a month of work among heads of its art, design, engineering, drafting, estimating, and survey departments, as well as numerous consultations with the Culver City Planning Commission, City Council, and Redevelopment Agency.

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Physical restoration of the sign consumed another month in the Heath plant, under the guidance of more than a dozen engineers, metal and steel fabricators, painters, electricians and lighting specialists.

A dozen very strong men used Heath's special yard cranes to load the sign's Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer panel in sections aboard four flatbed trailers, accompanied by five trailers and truckloads of special equipment on a freeway trip from the Lincoln Heights facility to the Filmland Center in Culver City. The Leo panel was loaded aboard its own trailer and transported via a surface-street route planned meticulously to avoid overhead obstructions.

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Fireworks for the unveiling ceremony are being provided by Astro Pyrotechnics, specialists in large-scale theatrical events since 1972, whose airborne magic was seen by television audiences around the world during the 1986 Statue of Liberty Centennial Celebration.

Astro's unique skyshow for the MGM Sign Dedication will require hundreds of pounds of display and lifting powder, more than four miles of electronic cable, and twenty custom power packs used to trigger individual charges and drive the show's animated displays.

Over 350 colorful effects will be seen within just the first twelve seconds of the presentation, which will light up the skies over Culver City for a total of two minutes and twenty-five seconds.

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MGM's Leo is not only one of the most widely-recognized trademarks in the world -- it is also the longest-running part ever played by a series of animal actors.

The original model for Leo, a resident of Gay's Animal Farm in Southern California, was a toothsome fellow with a name befitting a Thirties gangster -- Slat. Following the introduction of talkies, a lion named Jackie became the first whose roar could be heard around the world. Tanner, Jackie's stand-in, was selected to become the first Leo to appear on-screen in Technicolor, thanks to a rich and tawny shading that made him "a natural."

Leo is currently being portrayed by Sudan, a bright and cooperative five year-old just now reaching maturity. Born at the twenty-five acre compound of Animal Actors in Thousand Oaks, he was escorted by trainers Wally Roth, Cheryl Harris and Julian Sylvester for his appearance at the MGM sign dedication.

Sudan is one of very few adult male lions currently working in motion pictures and television -- a fact owing primarily to his unusually beautiful mane and exceptionally relaxed temperament. His screen credits include "Out of Africa," in which he played the lion who mysteriously watches over the grave of hunter Denis Finch Hatton at the film's conclusion.

Born in April, 1982, Sudan currently weighs approximately four hundred pounds. As yet, he is unmarried.

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Leo the Lion roaring again atop MGM Filmland Center

By THERESE L. WELLS

MGM's legendary Leo the Lion once again rules the skies above Culver City, following last week's spectacular ceremony to relight the heralded MGM sign above the company's new Filmland Center headquarters.

MGM/UA chairman and CEO Lee Rich was joined by Gene Kelly for the emotional evening ceremony, as the two jointly triggered a brilliant cascade of fireworks that climbed Filmland's tiered balconies in rapid succession.

To the nostalgic strains of "That's Entertainment," the 2½-minute shower of sparks culminated when MGM's landmark sign — which had been unceremoniously removed by Lorimar just a few months ago — was illuminated in spotlights and neon atop MGM's new home for the first time.

With all the glamour of the famed movie premieres of years past, the

evening — which would have made Louis B. Mayer proud — also featured a touching appearance by the real Leo the Lion, whose classic rendering is immortalized in MGM's logo, along with its traditional motto, *Ars Gratia Artis*.

Prior to the spectacular lighting ceremony, which lit up the sky for miles around, Rich took to the podium to herald both MGM's past and its future.

"The motto of MGM/UA Communications Co. is 'Two proud pasts ... one glorious future,'" an enthusiastic Rich began, noting "We're very proud of the legendary MGM past and the extraordinary past of United Artists. Now — together, we have one company, with what we are convinced is a glorious future."

After singling out key members of MGM's current management team — including Steve Silbert, Sid Sapsowitz, Alan Ladd, Tony Thomopoulos, David Gerber, Norman Horowitz and David Forbes — Rich also recognized "all of the people at MGM/UA who have begun to build our future."

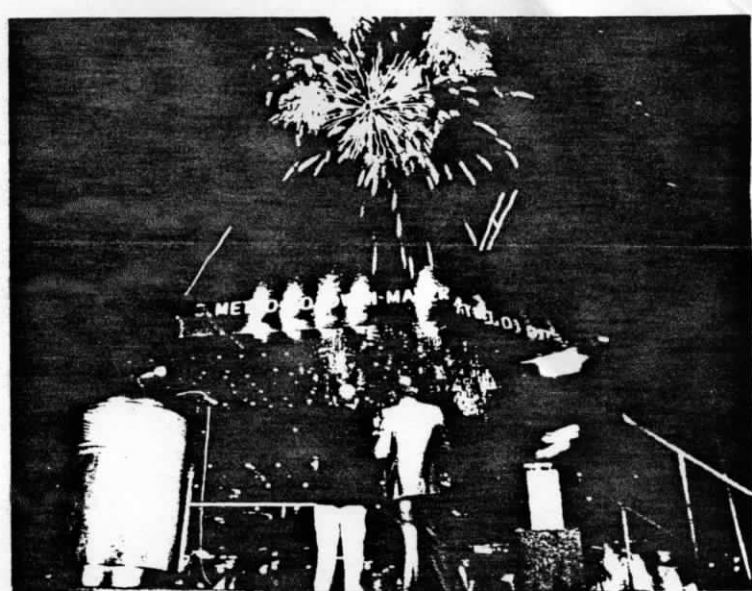
"In one short year," he said, "our team has created a combined slate of films that can stand up to any slate at any of the major studios."

"At MGM/UA," he continued, "we have the enthusiasm and fresh perspective and the top professionals in every facet of our business. And our management is behind all of you, 100%. Let's all look forward to a hard-working, exhilarating, rewarding future together."

Addressing the purpose of the evening, Rich observed, "Tonight we are focusing on MGM, and honoring that ageless, king of the entertainment world, Leo the Lion. The MGM lion is one of the most recognizable logos, wherever you go around the world. Generations of audiences worldwide know Leo the Lion."

"The MGM sign and the MGM name," he continued, "have always stood for the very best in entertainment. This is as true today as it was some 60 years ago. The company's commitment to give the audience the very best in entertainment remains as strong as ever."

"To reflect our commitment to excellence, we have chosen the Filmland Corporate Center as the new home for the Metro Goldwyn Mayer Pictures, MGM/UA TV and MGM/UA Telecommunications op-



Leo Roars Again — MGM's trademark sign was unveiled Thursday night atop Filmland Center. MGM/UA chairman and CEO Lee Rich and Culver City mayor Dick Brundo watch as Leo takes his new throne. (See story, page 4.)

erations. We believe that this modern, beautiful facility will prove to be the place to help build what we foresee as a glorious future for this company."

One of the critical components of that growth, Rich added, will be the partnership of the company with its home community, Culver City.

"After all," Rich concluded, "the MGM sign belongs here. MGM and Culver City are one. ... Moviemaking history was made on these streets by men such as Louis B. Mayer, Sam Goldwyn and Irving Thalberg. We feel that sense of history tonight."

Kelly, one of the names most synonymous with the glory days of MGM, also took the podium briefly, noting simply and touchingly, "I was here so many years, its home to me. That's why I'm here tonight, just like you are. We don't have to be here. We want to be here."

MGM's Mane Attraction Back In Spotlight

By JANE GALBRAITH

So what if the lion rented to represent Leo seemed too doped-up to roar — the fireworks set off in his honor were spectacular. At least, that seemed to be the consensus of the crowd last Thursday night, who oooooed and ahhhhed as each tier of the Filmland Corporate Center exploded in showers of color to celebrate the relighting of the MGM sign at the top.

It was Hollywood fanfare at its finest (except that it was in Culver City).

Search lights, song girls, piped-in music (specifically, "That's Entertainment") and one certifiable MGM star, Gene Kelly, were all part of MGM's party to itself at its new headquarters at Filmcorp.

When everyone else was moved across the street into an office building when the old MGM lot was sold to Lorimar Telepictures, poor Leo was dismantled — a lion without a lair.

The new management at MGM/UA Communications — which, strange but true, has former LT co-owner Lee Rich as its chairman — figured this was no way to treat a venerable senior citizen. (Leo was "born" atop the lot's wardrobe building in 1927.)

Leo and the motto that encircles his mane, "Ars Gratia Artis," had come to symbolize not only Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the studio that claimed to have "more stars than there are in heaven," but also one of the most recognized of American trademarks around the world.

It was bad enough that MGM was booted from its historic home, but to lose Leo from the Culver City skyline was a real crime. That was a sentiment expressed by nearly

everyone when Ted Turner announced that the MGM lot he bought to allegedly make motion pictures, was now being sold to Lorimar.

Among the most concerned were the citizens of Culver City, whose town's identity was pretty well wrapped up with MGM's.

No Protection

It was a blow when the studio back lot was sold off for the development of townhomes and they could do nothing about it. This time, a group of concerned preservationists approached the City Council to see what they could do to save the sign.

The sign had no protection as a historical landmark, so its fate was

left in the hands of its owner. And the rest, as they say, is now (recent) history.

After a few months of shuffling papers and getting okays from the Culver City Planning Commission, the City Council and Redevelopment agency, Leo was given a new lair.

Redesigned and refurbished, the new MGM sign — all 15 tons of steel and lighting — was hoisted piece-by-piece via a Bell Helicopter and a 220-ton crane over a two-and-a-half week period.

Until Thursday afternoon, it was hard to see how it looked, since it was covered by tarpaulin. But when Rich threw the switch to light it later that night, even the sedated animal on the ground below looked up.

REP 6-15-87

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— continued on page 8

Leo the Lion

continued from page 4 —

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MGM/UA Distribution Co.

11111 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angeles, California 90025
Telephone: 213 444-1500



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P.O. Box 3428
Culver City, CA 90230

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A History of the MGM Trademark and Sign



One of the world's most well-known trademarks was born in the imagination of a young man determined to make good at his first job.

In 1916, young Howard Dietz had just been hired by the Phillip Goodman Agency in New York, after leaving Columbia University during his senior year. He was quickly handed one of the advertising agency's toughest assignments – to create a trademark for the then-new Samuel Goldwyn Pictures Company.

After toying unsuccessfully with several ideas, Dietz decided to "borrow" the reclining lion figure from Columbia University, which had first adopted the King of Beasts as a symbol in the days it had been known as Kings College. After adding a few touches of his own, including a pair of torches, he presented a sketch to Sam Goldwyn.

"I like that cat," Goldwyn reportedly said. "Call him Leo and make him a little more artistic around the mane." Recalling a motto recited constantly by his Latin professor, Dietz scrawled "Ars Gratia Artis" (Art for Art's Sake) across the layout, and a trademark was born.

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MGM's trademark was not the first screen symbol to grace the Culver City skyline.

Constructed by Thomas Ince in 1915, the famed lot originally displayed a familiarly shaped sign: a circular Ince logo above a long panel containing the production facility's original name, Triangle Studios.

The Triangle sign stood atop the Wardrobe Building, overlooking what is now the lot's Washington Blvd. parking area, until the studio was purchased by Goldwyn Pictures in 1918.

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When Metro Productions and Goldwyn Pictures joined together under the leadership of Louis B. Mayer to form Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Leo was quickly selected as the on-screen replacement of Metro Pictures' parrot, who had frantically tossed the letters in the company's name all over the screen.

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Artist Morris Rosenbaum is credited with executing the now-classic design of the MGM trademark. Familiar to millions of moviegoers around the world, it features a roaring Leo encircled by ribbons of movie film, above a laughing muse and laurel wreaths. According to historical records, the trademark was first used on July 25, 1924; although the date of the sign's debut has not been similarly documented, it is present in photographs of the studio lot dating to 1927.

The U.S. Patent Office first registered the traditional MGM trademark on August 16, 1927, along with a recording of Leo's roar -- one of the very rare instances in which a sound has been registered by the Patent Office for a company's exclusive use.

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In the beginning the MGM sign featured the familiar face of Leo and two rectangular panels: one bearing the name Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the other with the word Studios (spelled in the classic Roman manner, with a V in place of the U). Initially located atop the studio's Wardrobe Building, the MGM sign was relocated to a higher vantage point following completion of the 95' 10" tall Stage 6 in 1930. In all, the MGM sign overlooked the studio's famed sound stages for more than sixty years.

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Modified slightly over the years for structural and aesthetic reasons, the basic design of the MGM sign has never been altered. One such modification was removal of the panel bearing the word Studios, which was replaced by a panel used to display the titles of current MGM films.

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Restored over the course of two months in 1987, the MGM sign is supported atop the Filmland Center on five 37' tall steel columns, each weighing in at nearly 2,700 lbs.

Approximately 105' 6" in length at its longest point and 21' 6" high at its tallest point, the sign itself weighs an estimated 16,000 lbs. The Leo section is 15' tall, 32' wide, and 3,000 lbs. in weight; the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer panel is 105' 6" long, 6'6" high and weighs 13,000 lbs. In all, total weight of the MGM sign and its supporting columns is estimated at 29,500 lbs. -- nearly 15 tons.

The top of the MGM sign now reaches a height of approximately 160', measured from the ground floor of the Filmland Center. For aesthetic reasons, the newly-restored sign will not include a panel displaying titles of current MGM films.

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Leo now has his own typeface, according to Heath and Company, the firm responsible for restoring and reinstalling the historic MGM sign atop the world-famous movie company's new headquarters in Culver City.

While preparing to restore the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer panel, Heath's experts discovered that the classic style of lettering originally used could not be found in any existing type book.

Thus was born "Metro Roman," which currently contains fourteen letters -- those used in the words "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer" and the company's well-known motto, "Ars Gratia Artis."

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The MGM sign was installed on the roof of the Filmland Center with the help of a Bell UH-1 Helicopter, and a 220 ton crane with a 400' long boom -- believed to be the tallest mobile heavy-lifting device west of the Rockies.

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Heath and Company originally estimated that 1600 man-hours would be required to reassemble and install the sign atop the Filmland Center -- yet the work went so smoothly that they now estimate it required only 800 man-hours. More than a dozen workers were involved in the installation over a two and a half week period.

Planning and preparation activities at Heath required over a month of work among heads of its art, design, engineering, drafting, estimating, and survey departments, as well as numerous consultations with the Culver City Planning Commission, City Council, and Redevelopment Agency.

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Physical restoration of the sign consumed another month in the Heath plant, under the guidance of more than a dozen engineers, metal and steel fabricators, painters, electricians and lighting specialists.

A dozen very strong men used Heath's special yard cranes to load the sign's Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer panel in sections aboard four flatbed trailers, accompanied by five trailers and truckloads of special equipment on a freeway trip from the Lincoln Heights facility to the Filmland Center in Culver City. The Leo panel was loaded aboard its own trailer and transported via a surface-street route planned meticulously to avoid overhead obstructions.

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Fireworks for the unveiling ceremony are being provided by Astro Pyrotechnics, specialists in large-scale theatrical events since 1972, whose airborne magic was seen by television audiences around the world during the 1986 Statue of Liberty Centennial Celebration.

Astro's unique skyshow for the MGM Sign Dedication will require hundreds of pounds of display and lifting powder, more than four miles of electronic cable, and twenty custom power packs used to trigger individual charges and drive the show's animated displays.

Over 350 colorful effects will be seen within just the first twelve seconds of the presentation, which will light up the skies over Culver City for a total of two minutes and twenty-five seconds.

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MGM's Leo is not only one of the most widely-recognized trademarks in the world -- it is also the longest-running part ever played by a series of animal actors.

The original model for Leo, a resident of Gay's Animal Farm in Southern California, was a toothsome fellow with a name befitting a Thirties gangster -- Slat. Following the introduction of talkies, a lion named Jackie became the first whose roar could be heard around the world. Tanner, Jackie's stand-in, was selected to become the first Leo to appear on-screen in Technicolor, thanks to a rich and tawny shading that made him "a natural."

Leo is currently being portrayed by Sudan, a bright and cooperative five year-old just now reaching maturity. Born at the twenty-five acre compound of Animal Actors in Thousand Oaks, he was escorted by trainers Wally Roth, Cheryl Harris and Julian Sylvester for his appearance at the MGM sign dedication.

Sudan is one of very few adult male lions currently working in motion pictures and television -- a fact owing primarily to his unusually beautiful mane and exceptionally relaxed temperament. His screen credits include "Out of Africa," in which he played the lion who mysteriously watches over the grave of hunter Denis Finch Hatton at the film's conclusion.

Born in April, 1982, Sudan currently weighs approximately four hundred pounds. As yet, he is unmarried.

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Leo the Lion roaring again atop MGM Filmland Center

By THERESE L. WELLS

MGM's legendary Leo the Lion once again rules the skies above Culver City, following last week's spectacular ceremony to relight the heralded MGM sign above the company's new Filmland Center headquarters.

MGM/UA chairman and CEO Lee Rich was joined by Gene Kelly for the emotional evening ceremony, as the two jointly triggered a brilliant cascade of fireworks that climbed Filmland's tiered balconies in rapid succession.

To the nostalgic strains of "That's Entertainment," the 2½-minute shower of sparks culminated when MGM's landmark sign — which had been unceremoniously removed by Lorimar just a few months ago — was illuminated in spotlights and neon atop MGM's new home for the first time.

With all the glamour of the famed movie premieres of years past, the

evening — which would have made Louis B. Mayer proud — also featured a touching appearance by the real Leo the Lion, whose classic rendering is immortalized in MGM's logo, along with its traditional motto, *Ars Gratia Artis*.

Prior to the spectacular lighting ceremony, which lit up the sky for miles around, Rich took to the podium to herald both MGM's past and its future.

"The motto of MGM/UA Communications Co. is 'Two proud pasts ... one glorious future,'" an enthusiastic Rich began, noting "We're very proud of the legendary MGM past and the extraordinary past of United Artists. Now — together, we have one company, with what we are convinced is a glorious future."

After singling out key members of MGM's current management team — including Steve Silbert, Sid Sapsowitz, Alan Ladd, Tony Tho-

mopoulos, David Gerber, Norman Horowitz and David Forbes — Rich also recognized "all of the people at MGM/UA who have begun to build our future."

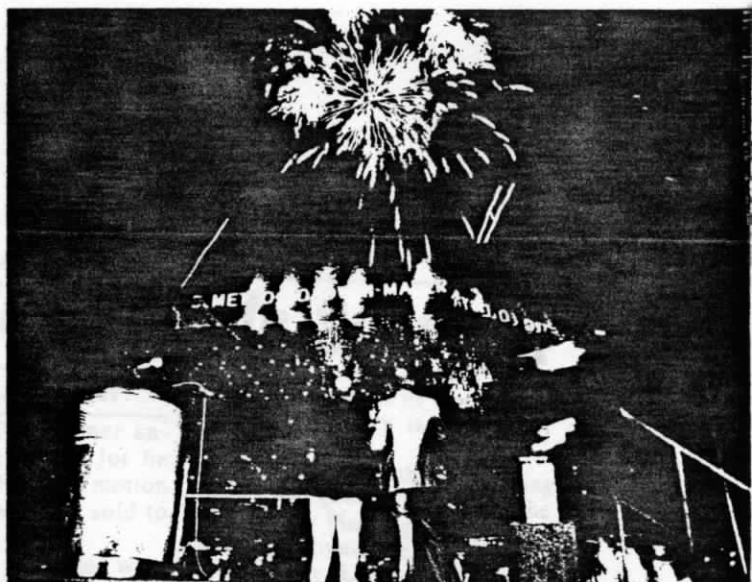
"In one short year," he said, "our team has created a combined slate of films that can stand up to any slate at any of the major studios."

"At MGM/UA," he continued, "we have the enthusiasm and fresh perspective and the top professionals in every facet of our business. And our management is behind all of you, 100%. Let's all look forward to a hard-working, exhilarating, rewarding future together."

Addressing the purpose of the evening, Rich observed, "Tonight we are focusing on MGM, and honoring that ageless, king of the entertainment world, Leo the Lion. The MGM lion is one of the most recognizable logos, wherever you go around the world. Generations of audiences worldwide know Leo the Lion."

"The MGM sign and the MGM name," he continued, "have always stood for the very best in entertainment. This is as true today as it was some 60 years ago. The company's commitment to give the audience the very best in entertainment remains as strong as ever."

"To reflect our commitment to excellence, we have chosen the Filmland Corporate Center as the new home for the Metro Goldwyn Mayer Pictures, MGM/UA TV and MGM/UA Telecommunications op-



Leo Roars Again — MGM's trademark sign was unveiled Thursday night atop Filmland Center. MGM/UA chairman and CEO Lee Rich and Culver City mayor Dick Brundo watch as Leo takes his new throne. (See story, page 4.)

erations. We believe that this modern, beautiful facility will prove to be the place to help build what we foresee as a glorious future for this company."

One of the critical components of that growth, Rich added, will be the partnership of the company with its home community, Culver City.

"After all," Rich concluded, "the MGM sign belongs here. MGM and Culver City are one. ... Moviemaking history was made on these streets by men such as Louis B. Mayer, Sam Goldwyn and Irving Thalberg. We feel that sense of history tonight."

Kelly, one of the names most synonymous with the glory days of MGM, also took the podium briefly, noting simply and touchingly, "I was here so many years, its home to me. That's why I'm here tonight, just like you are. We don't have to be here. We want to be here."

MGM's Mane Attraction Back In Spotlight

So what if the lion rented to represent Leo seemed too doped-up to roar — the fireworks set off in his honor were spectacular. At least, that seemed to be the consensus of the crowd last Thursday night, who oooooed and ahhhhed as each tier of the Filmland Corporate Center exploded in showers of color to celebrate the relighting of the MGM sign at the top.

It was Hollywood fanfare at its finest (except that it was in Culver City).

Search lights, song girls, piped-in music (specifically, "That's Entertainment") and one certifiable MGM star, Gene Kelly, were all part of MGM's party to itself at its new headquarters at Filmcorp.

When everyone else was moved across the street into an office building when the old MGM lot was sold to Lorimar Telepictures, poor Leo was dismantled — a lion without a lair.

The new management at MGM/UA Communications — which, strange but true, has former LT co-owner Lee Rich as its chairman — figured this was no way to treat a venerable senior citizen. (Leo was "born" atop the lot's wardrobe building in 1927.)

Leo and the motto that encircles his mane, "Ars Gratia Artis," had come to symbolize not only Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the studio that claimed to have "more stars than there are in heaven," but also one of the most recognized of American trademarks around the world.

It was bad enough that MGM was booted from its historic home, but to lose Leo from the Culver City skyline was a real crime. That was a sentiment expressed by nearly

By JANE GALBRAITH

everyone when Ted Turner announced that the MGM lot he bought to allegedly make motion pictures, was now being sold to Lorimar.

Among the most concerned were the citizens of Culver City, whose town's identity was pretty well wrapped up with MGM's.

No Protection

It was a blow when the studio back lot was sold off for the development of townhomes and they could do nothing about it. This time, a group of concerned preservationists approached the City Council to see what they could do to save the sign.

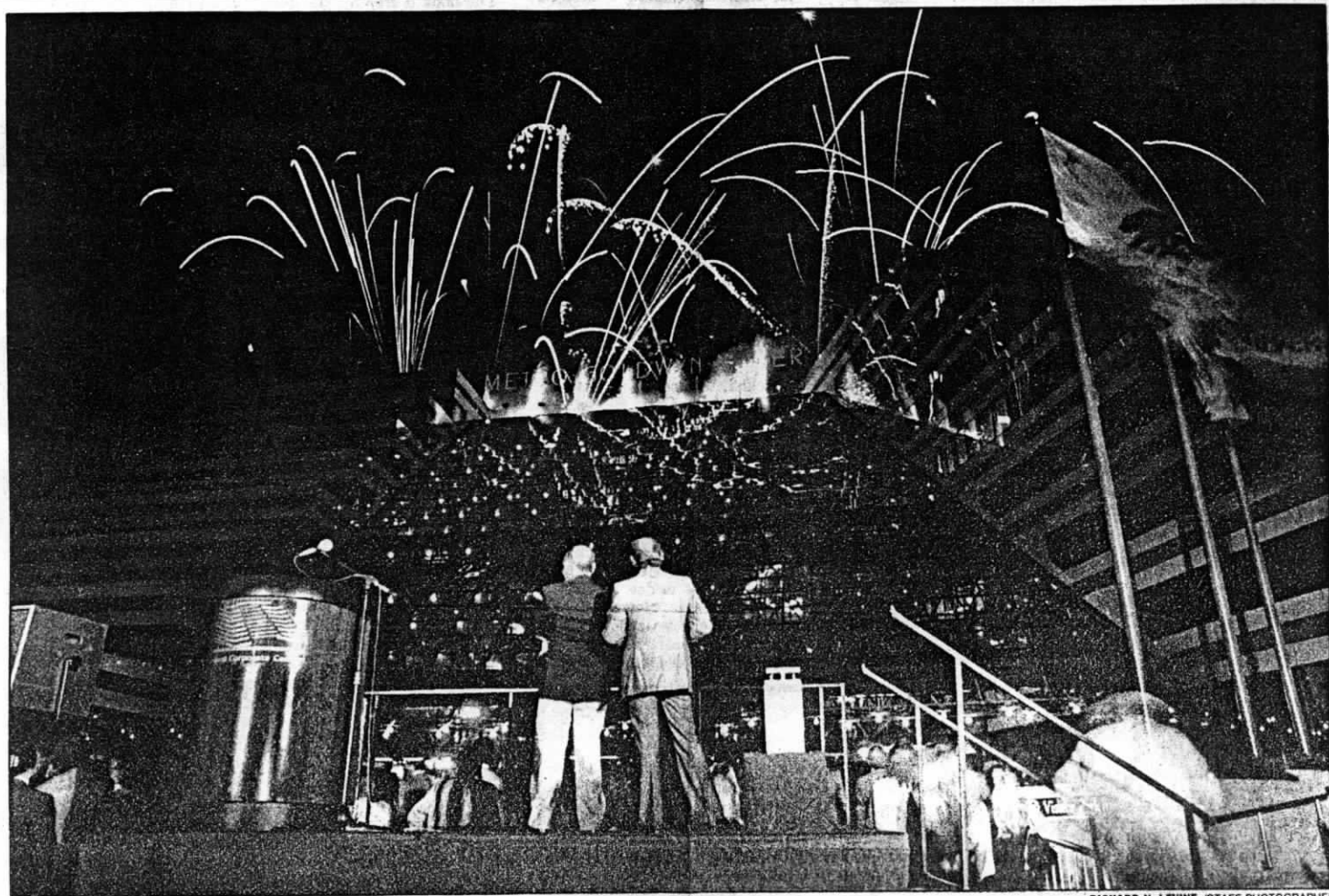
The sign had no protection as a historical landmark, so its fate was

left in the hands of its owner. And the rest, as they say, is now (recent) history.

After a few months of shuffling papers and getting okays from the Culver City Planning Commission, the City Council and Redevelopment agency, Leo was given a new lair.

Redesigned and refurbished, the new MGM sign — all 15 tons of steel and lighting — was hoisted piece-by-piece via a Bell Helicopter and a 220-ton crane over a two-and-a-half week period.

Until Thursday afternoon, it was hard to see how it looked, since it was covered by tarpaulin. But when Rich threw the switch to light it later that night, even the sedated animal on the ground below looked up.



RICHARD N. LEVINE /STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Fireworks light up the front of the MGM-UA Entertainment Co.'s new headquarters at the Filmland Corporate Center at 10000 Washington Blvd.

MGM-UA throws gala to mark historic sign's return

By Rick Cziment
STAFF WRITER

Leo the rented lion yawned. Fireworks exploded to the roar of hundreds of onlookers. And Gene Kelly proclaimed, "God bless MGM!"

All this, and more, happened last week in Culver City at the gala celebration to mark the moving of the historic MGM sign from the studio's former lot to MGM-UA Entertainment Co.'s new headquarters at the Filmland Corporate Center, across the street on Washington Boulevard.

As they would say at MGM, "That's

entertainment."

There was a lion's share of food and drink, and a dessert table large enough to induce global insulin shock.

And there was a heap of civic pride in Culver City, a community whose motto is "The Heart of Screenland."

"I just flew in today from San Francisco and was taking a cab down Culver Boulevard and could see the MGM sign up there," said Councilman Paul Netz-el. "I was so proud to see it in such a prominent place in the community."

"This evening the heart of screenland continues to sparkle as MGM-UA lights up again in Culver City," said

Mayor Richard Brundo.

Kelly, the star of such MGM musicals as "Singing in the Rain" and "An American In Paris," called the event a "homecoming" and said: "I don't have to be here; I want to be here. God bless MGM." Added MGM-UA chairman Lee Rich, motioning across the street to Lorimar Studios, his former employer: "I've worked on the other side of the street and now on this side, and let me just say it's much better over here."

Filmland, a striking pink marble and glass tiered building designed to resemble a Mayan temple, caters to movie and television producers. MGM-UA

leases five of the eight floors. The building is located at 10000 Washington Blvd.

For the event, MGM-UA rented a 5-year-old, 400-pound African lion named Sudan. (He can be seen watching over the grave of hunter Denis Finch Hatton at the conclusion of the movie "Out of Africa"). Actually, though MGM's mascot is named Leo, his portrayals through the decades have had names like Slat and Jackie.

The MGM billboard, with its roaring lion visage and slogan *Ars Gratia Artis* (art for art's sake) had lorded over the

MGM/A6

6-18-1987 Culver City News

Lady Liberty gets Culver OK

MGM's lonely Leo the Lion, perched atop the Filmland Corporate Center, will soon have company on the Culver City skyline.

The City Council gave Columbia Pictures Entertainment permission to erect its Lady Liberty logo atop the studio's lot across the street.

The gigantic, 3-panel billboard, which rises from Sound Stage 6 on the Columbia lot, was once Leo's lair when MGM owned the famed 44-acre facility, bounded by Washington and Culver boulevards and Overland and Madison avenues.

The council on Monday approved Columbia's request to put Lady Liberty, who holds a fiery torch backed by a blazing sun, on the top panel, and the title "Columbia Studios" across the middle section.

Sm outlook

11-28-90

Culver City 10-8-92

MGM Plans to Leave Town

The famous MGM lion, pestered by poor financial health, is in search of a cheaper lair.

MGM leases office space at the Filmland Corp. Center in Culver City. It is trying to get out of the lease, forged in the high interest rates '80s, in favor of a recession-rate lease, probably in Santa Monica, industry sources said. MGM would not comment on the move.

MGM is negotiating with Sony Pictures Entertainment to take over the lease, a Sony spokeswoman said. Sony can use the office space as an interim step in relocating its far-flung media operations to the studio lot next door.

Culver City officials confirmed rumors of MGM's imminent departure earlier this

week. MGM has been making movies in Culver City since the 1920s. Many local residents have worked at the studio or played extras.

The "Leo the Lion" sign sitting on top of the Filmland building has stood in Culver City for more than half a century.

"It will be a sad day in Culver-town when the sign is removed that has graced this community for such a long time," City Manager Jody Hall-Esser said. "We're sad to see them go."

According Esser, there was nothing the city could do to persuade MGM to stay.

10-8-92

MGM move

Continued from page 3—

with MGM, and editing and post-production facilities. The facility also will be equipped for servicing of the MGM/UA film library, encompassing thousands of features, including "Thelma & Louise," "Some Like It Hot," "Raging Bull," "Moonstruck," "A Fish Called Wanda," "Rocky" and the James Bond series.

"The opportunity to upgrade our offices within a customized, state-of-the-art facility, situated on grounds with an inspiring ambience, is yet another step in our efforts to reclaim the quality and luster that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer has represented for so many years," said co-chairmen and co-CEOs Dennis Stanfill and Alan Ladd Jr. in a statement.

This is only the third move in MGM's 78-year history. Credit Lyonnais, the French state-owned bank, now owns MGM after having gained control of the studio in a bitter legal battle with Italian financier Giancarlo Parretti.

The nearly 1 million-square-foot commercial complex is a joint venture of Maguire Thomas Partners and computer giant IBM Corp. MGM will occupy 200,000 square feet under a 10-year lease, with three successive five-year renewal options.

MGM officials said the signage on the new MGM Plaza has not been finalized. It is expected, however, that the studio's famed Leo the Lion will be displayed, according to sources.

The studio is now distributing "Of Mice and Men" and "The Lover." Upcoming films include the Madonna starrer "Body of Evidence," "Untamed Heart," "The Meteor Man," and "Rich in Love."

"MGM selected Colorado Place because we believe its campus environment fosters the creative process necessary to continue to produce quality entertainment product," said Ladd.

Closing of the transaction is subject to certain conditions that are expected to be satisfied within the next week, the company said.

"Seeing the number of companies that are locating here — not only in the entertainment industry — shows we must be doing something right here," said Genser, adding that the city has low taxes and provides services above and beyond what other communities offer.

He noted that the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences, which is behind the Grammys, is moving from Burbank to

News

Culver City loses lion's share

MGM's move west to Santa Monica 'very attractive financial deal'

By Jeffrey Daniels

MGM has confirmed that it will move to new headquarters in Santa Monica, continuing a trend of entertainment companies moving to the coastal city (HR 10/9).

MGM's planned move from its Filmland Corp. Center in Culver City coincided with Sony Pictures Entertainment's announcement Friday that it will integrate Filmland into its operations and rename it Sony Pictures Plaza (story on page 15).

"We're becoming an internationally known center for the arts,"

said Santa Monica Mayor Ken Genser, noting that several other entertainment organizations are based in the coastal community and the annual American Film Market and Locations Expo are conducted there.

According to MGM, its new corporate offices will be at the former Colorado Place, at 2500 Broadway Ave. in Santa Monica. The multi-tenant complex of six buildings has now been renamed Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Plaza.

"It's a very attractive financial deal for MGM," said MGM

spokesman Craig Parsons. "We're not sure when the actual move will be, but hopefully in first quarter but possibly into the spring."

Its new headquarters will include a state-of-the-art screening room, smaller screening rooms for dailies, specially designed areas for independent producers affiliated

See **MGM MOVE** on page 15



Photo by Howard Waggner/BPI

Last roar in Culver City

The Leo the Lion logo comes down off its perch atop the MGM headquarters in Culver City on Saturday. MGM has confirmed it will be moving west, to a new base in Santa Monica. Story on page 3.

Santa Monica. Sony Corp.'s Columbia Records, Epic Records and affiliated labels also call Santa Monica their West Coast home after recently moving from Century City.

Several small and medium movie companies, such as Trimark Holdings Inc., also are based in Santa Monica.

Interestingly, one of Southern California's first production companies — Vitagraph — located in

Santa Monica during the early 1920s and later became part of Warner Bros. Vitagraph eventually moved to Hollywood because of fog endemic to coastal Santa Monica that interrupted shooting.

"We are sorry to see an old friend leave," said Steve Rose, president of the Culver City Chamber of Commerce.

Rose said the cost of doing business in Culver City is similar to Santa Monica. "The entire reason

for the (MGM) move was purely economic for rental costs and overhead."

After the move, one fringe benefit for MGM employees will be that MGM employees will be allowed to send their children to Santa Monica's public schools even if they don't reside in the community. Genser said the unusual policy is designed to keep enrollment up at a time when schools are experiencing declining headcounts. □

11-16-92 Variety

MGM OUT, SONY IN AT FILMLAND

Leo's moving to Santa Monica; SPE shifts staff from Burbank

BY JUDY BRENNAN

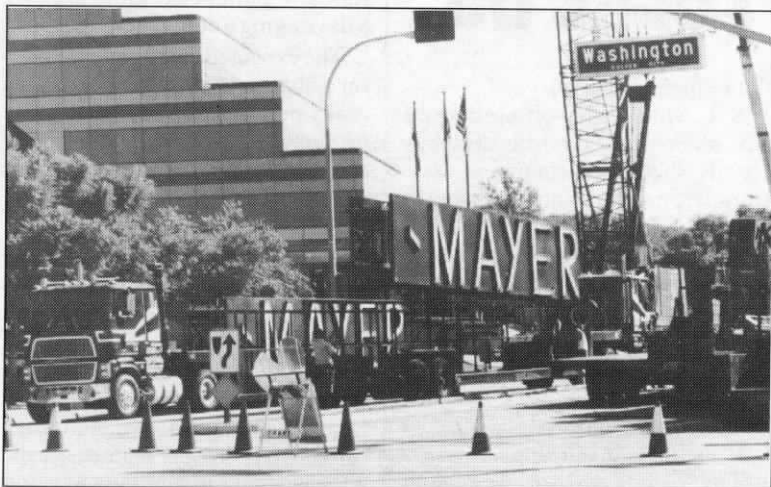
Sony's Columbia torchbearer has finally pried MGM's Leo the Lion from his Culver City lair.

MGM's on-again, off-again home, Filmland, will become the new roost next summer for about 600 to 700 Sony employees now working in Burbank.

The 202,000-square-foot structure sits across the street from Sony Pictures Studios, where 1,400 employees and executives are currently housed. The Sony lot was MGM's original home.

MGM will begin pulling up stakes next spring and move to Colorado Place in Santa Monica, a 15-acre office campus at the corner of 26th Street and Colorado Avenue to be renamed Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Plaza.

As a huge crane pulled down the MGM sign in Culver City over the weekend, the building got a new identity: Sony Pictures Plaza. The move represents yet another phase



Jason Dost

A crane removes the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer sign from Filmland Corporate Center in Culver City, soon to house Sony Pictures Entertainment.

in Sony Pictures Entertainment's efforts to turn the area into its global headquarters.

Both studios were mum on the amount SPE is paying for the new lease and the fee to MGM to move out. But several sources indicate

the move represents a savings of about \$25 million to \$27 million over a 10-year lease for the debt-strapped MGM.

It also marks the third time MGM has relocated in five years.

MGM first moved into the

10000 W. Washington Blvd. address in 1987, when Kirk Kerkorian helmed the operation.

In November 1990, Kerkorian sold it to Italian financier Giancarlo Parretti and before year's end, MGM ankled Culver City for the old Cannon Pictures/Pathe Communications building at 640 San Vicente in Beverly Hills.

By the fall of 1991, MGM's huge debt problems under Parretti's brief reign forced it to forego the costly BevHills address and its new owner Credit Lyonnais wanted to cut any ties to Parretti, who owned the property. MGM headed back to Filmland in September 1991.

Despite the shifts, MGM always retained a history with Culver City. That history spans nearly seven decades, when one of the studio's founders, Samuel Goldwyn, opened what eventually became the MGM lot on a huge expanse of farmland on April 17, 1924.

Once MGM moves to the Santa Monica development, which was a

Turn to page 7

MGM out, Sony in at Filmland

Continued from page 3

joint venture between IBM and Maguire Thomas Partners, the six existing buildings will be customized to the studio's specs.

The MGM new corporate headquarters will include a state-of-the-art screening room to accommodate special events, including premieres; two or three smaller screening rooms for dailies; specially designed areas for independent producers; editing and post-production facilities; an area to service the MGM/UA film library, an existing food court to be renamed the Commissary; a daycare center; a health club; kiosks featuring MGM films; and the MGM Studio Store.

The new Santa Monica address was one of three locales MGM had been mulling for months (*Daily Variety*, June 15). Although some perceive it as generally removed from the hub of Hollywood, Santa Monica is also the home to Oliver Stone's Ixtlan Prods., Ed Zwick/Marshall Herskovitz's Bedford Falls Prods., George Lucas' Skywalker Sound and the American Film Foundation, among others.

As for SPE, the move into the current MGM home doesn't mean it is abandoning Burbank. Exactly who will stay and who will transfer has yet to be determined, said SPE spokesman Peter Wilkes.

The deal has no direct bearing on SPE's continued renovation — or planned expansion — of its 45-acre Sony Pictures Studios, or its

13-acre Culver Studios television headquarters—acquired from the Gannett Corp. for an estimated \$70 million in August 1991. SPE currently has a proposed comprehensive plan for continued development of its facilities before Culver City's City Council.

MGM Moves to Santa Monica

Era Ends With Removal of Sign

By RON SMITH
City Editor

After spending most of her Saturday submerged in meetings in downtown Los Angeles, resident Bonnie Walsh decided to take a run around Culver City to free herself from the day's stress.

As Walsh neared the Filmland Corporate Center on Washington Boulevard, she froze and stood in disbelief.

Where's the sign? she asked herself.

Sign is Gone

"Leo the Lion," the famed trademark for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures Inc. was gone.

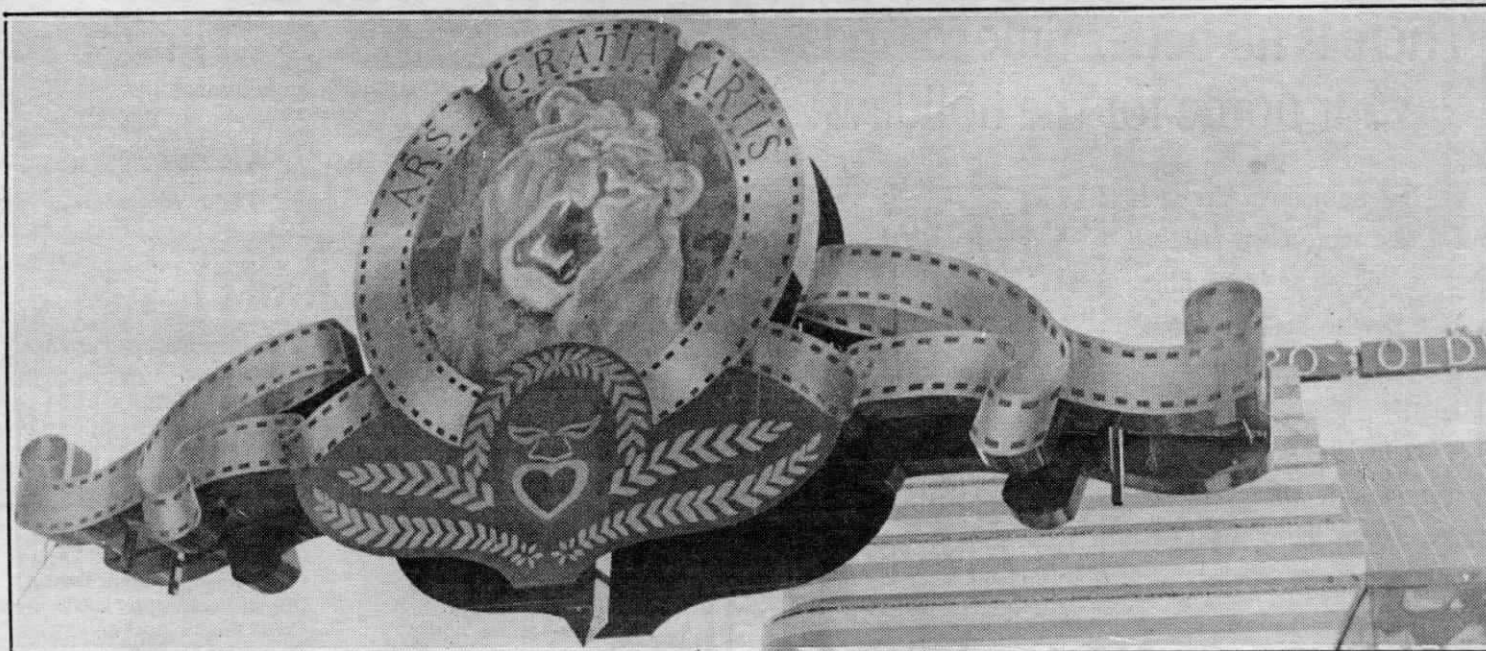
"I was caught off-guard," said Walsh, the president of the Culver City Historical Society. "I had no idea they were going to take the sign down Saturday. I grew up with it. It's a shame. We've lost a tremendous piece of history."

Walsh's sentiments were echoed by many over the weekend when "Leo the Lion" was taken down from its perch atop of Filmland in preparation for MGM's move to Santa Monica.

Rumors Come True

Rumored for months, the announcement came last Friday that MGM will relocate its corporate headquarters to

Please see MGM, page 3



PHOTOS BY RUTH CHAMBERS

LEO'S LAST ROAR--MGM's famed "Leo the Lion" trademark is lowered onto a truck Saturday morning. The popular sign will be housed in a warehouse until its owners

decide where to place it. Above, the sign is removed from its perch atop the Filmland Corporate Center, which will become Sony Pictures Plaza.

MGM

what will be called Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Plaza at 2500 Broadway Ave. in the city of Santa Monica.

Formerly known as Colorado Place, the 200,000 square-foot site will be the new home to MGM's Culver City staff in the spring of 1993 after the premises has been custom-built to the company's specifications, said spokesman Craig A. Parsons.

Meanwhile, Sony Pictures Entertainment will integrate the Filmland Corporate Center into its operations and rename it Sony Pictures Plaza.

Sony Plans

Sony plans to occupy the building by next summer, spokesman Peter Wilkes said.

With the acquisition, 600 to 700 Sony employees, who are currently located in Burbank, will join the 1,400 employees already headquartered at the Sony Pictures Studios and the Culver Studios.

City Tried

The company, however, will maintain its Burbank offices, officials said.

MGM's move to Santa Monica was not a surprise to Culver City officials who had anticipated the company's departure.

"We had nothing to do with them leaving town," said Chief Administrative Officer Jody Hall-Esser. "We tried to work to keep them here, but the decision was out of our control."

A Good Deal

"The city has tried to help MGM over the years," Hall-Esser said. "We were instrumental to some extent in relocating MGM staff, who, at one time, were located in four different locations. We encouraged them to reconsolidate in Culver City."

Parsons said MGM's move was not a reflection on Culver City.

"It just happens to be a combination of getting the right financial arrangements. We found a very favorable package at Colorado Place," he said. "No one was dissatisfied with Culver City. There are few alternatives with this much space. 200,000 square feet is not always readily available."

So Long, Leo

With MGM's move, the "Leo the Lion" will no longer roar--at least not in Culver City.

For most of its existence in Culver City, the sign had been perched above Stage 6 of the old MGM Lot 1, which is now Sony Pictures Studios.

In 1984, after Filmland was completed and MGM moved into the new building, the City Council approved relocating the sign onto the Filmland building.

History of Sign

Because the sign previously had been declared "historically significant," the City Council's approval of the sign relocation required that if the sign were ever

to be abandoned in place, MGM would have to offer the city the first right of refusal to acquire it.

But MGM opted to take the sign with it when it moves to Santa Monica though there is a possibility the sign may remain in storage.

"I can appreciate the fact that Culver City will miss the sign," Parsons said. "It is an emotional thing. But it makes no sense for MGM to leave it in Culver City."

Sony is taking over the building. We didn't have a choice. We can't let another studio have our trademark."

MGM Lease

MGM has leased its new offices for a 10-year period, with three successive five-year renewal options, Parsons said. This is the third move in the company's 78-year history.

MGM's departure also gives Sony the opportunity to consolidate more of its employees.

"The addition of Sony Pictures Plaza significantly strengthens our existing headquarters facilities," Sony Executive Vice President Paul Schaeffer said in a written statement. "In addition to reflecting an acceleration of our long-term game plan, this move is a very cost-effective solution to our current space needs."

So Long, Leo...



PHOTO BY RUTH CHAMBERS

END OF AN ERA--Workers dismantle the famed "Leo the Lion" sign that is owned by MGM. The company will relocate to Santa Monica in the spring of 1993.

**TAKE A BITE OUT OF
CRIME**

January 18, 2000

Ref: MGM sign timeline proposal

**MGM Studios Inc.
Ann Lewis-Archives Dept
2500 Broadway Street #E1078
Santa Monica Calif. 90404**

Proposal for a timeline and written history of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer SIGN

The MGM SIGN project proposed here is a research project that Marc Wanamaker of the Bison Archives is qualified to prepare due to the detailed information that he and the Bison Archives have compiled on MGM and other studios histories since 1915.

From a collection of historical photographs and written information from many sources on the histories of the *Ince/Triangle*, *Goldwyn* and *MGM Studios*, a timeline on the history of the MGM sign can be compiled. The project would entail the writing of a timeline on the history of the 'sign' which went through several changes since 1915, when the sign was *Ince-Triangle/ 1919 Goldwyn/ 1924 Metro Goldwyn Mayer*. Further, historical photographs would be included to show how the signs were seen for miles around Culver City. With a written history and photographic proof, the report would show that the MGM sign became an historical icon of Culver City for over 60 years.

The MGM sign report would take around (30) hours at \$20.00 per hour which would total \$600.00, expenses included. (expenses would include: lazer copies of historical photographs.) If one would send a researcher to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences library to do the same research, a fee of over \$1,000 for researcher fees and \$30.00 per photograph would be charged. I propose a 50% discount on the entire project due to the Bison Archives already having the information in-house without having to find it among the voluminous resources of the Academy library.

In conclusion, I would propose to deliver a 'timeline' report and attached historical photographs showing the importance of the MGM sign on the history of Culver City and its qualifying for 'landmark' status wherever it may be erected. A fee of **\$600** would include the report and historical photographs documenting the *sign's* importance as an historical and cultural landmark.

Marc Wanamaker
Bison Archives


REF # 9086-68



February 15, 2000

MGM SIGN HISTORICAL TIMELINE (1916-1992) by Marc Wanamaker

Introduction

CULVER CITY was formed by Harry Culver in 1915 with the idea that his new city would be economically based on the business generated by the activities of a motion picture studio or studios. After meeting with film producer-studio owner, Thomas Ince, he convinced him to build his new studio in the new Culver City development. Construction began in early 1915 and by September, a new and modern motion picture studio was taking shape on Washington Boulevard. The new studio was funded in part by the *Triangle/Ince* organization and Harry Culver himself, leasing the land and loaning the money to build the buildings on the property. By early 1913, Harry Culver had built the first building (Culver Investment Company offices) on his sub-division, located on what was recorded as Main Street. In 1914 the new town had a grocery store, plumbing and hardware shop, macaroni factory, bank, candy store, newspaper (*The Culver City Call*), and some homes. Shortly thereafter, trees were planted, a lighting system installed and the streets paved. With the completion of the new studio nearby a new colossal-steel sign was installed on top of the administration building of the new Triangle studio. This sign became the first important landmark in the new town of Culver City. It wasn't until 1917 that the new town would be officially incorporated as **Culver City**. Indirectly, the new Triangle Sign helped gain the new town some notoriety which began the area's development as a 'studio town'. • •

When the Triangle Company folded and sold the studio to the Goldwyn Company, a new sign, similar to the previous one continued the tradition of the 'studio' sign in Culver City. When the Goldwyn Company merged with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer a larger sign supplanted the old one, but elements of the Goldwyn sign were incorporated into the new one. The signs over the years all were symbolic of the studio they represented as well as the town of Culver City. This symbiotic relationship between the studio and the city resulted in the Culver City Council declaring the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer sign as a cultural landmark in Culver City that had continuously represented the city's film industry for over 70 years.

MGM SIGN

HISTORICAL TIMELINE

1916-1992

- 1915** Construction of the new *Triangle/Thomas Ince Studios* in the new development of Culver City.
- 1916** Completion of the new *Triangle/Thomas Ince Studios* on Washington Blvd. with a new colossal electric steel sign installed on the rooftop of the main administration building. It read: **TRIANGLE STUDIOS-THOMAS H. INCE/KB-T**. Triangle stood for the New York based holding company while Thomas H. Ince was the producing branch and 'KB' stood for the production branch of Triangle's owners, Kessel and Baumann. The double-faced electric sign was positioned facing East-West and could be seen for miles away especially at night when it was illuminated. The new sign was designed by having the *Triangle Studios* portion as the base and the *Thomas Ince* portion of the sign placed in a circle high above the base. This new sign and the new studio it represented was publicized around the world, placing the new studio and its new town on the map.
- 1916-18** From the time of the opening of the new Triangle-Ince studios in Culver City, filmmaking dominated the area. There were farms still in operation however, but the true economic base for Culver City was its motion industry. The Triangle Company had studios in New York, Long Island and in Hollywood California. Triangle consisted of the holding company based in New York (owned by Adam Kessel and Charles Baumann) and directors, D.W. Griffith, Mack Sennett and Thomas H. Ince. By 1918, all the directors left the company, one by one, including Thomas Ince. Ince with the help of Harry Culver, built another studio only 1/4 mile east of the Triangle plant and named it the *Thomas H. Ince Studios*.
- 1918 Nov** By the end of 1918, with WWI having begun for Americans, the Triangle Company sold the studio to Samuel Goldwyn who had brought his new company from New York. A wooden box was built around the entire Triangle-Thomas H. Ince steel sign while a new one was being built for the new company. The 'box' was painted on both sides with the new name, **GOLDWYN STUDIOS**. Between the *Goldwyn* and the *Studios* names was the company logo, a profiled reclining lion, crowned with a film ribbon saying, *Ars-Gratia-Artis*. The new 'box' sign was the talk of Los Angeles, due to the fact that a landmark was making a drastic change.

1919 With the coming of the new year, a new electric steel sign was installed in the place where the old Triangle-Ince sign once stood. The new double-sided steel sign announced to the world, **GOLDWYN STUDIOS** and was again separated with a larger-steel version of Leo the Lion/front faced/portrait surrounded by the words, *Ars-Gratia-Artis*, this time sculpted in relief steel.

1921 In 1921 Samuel Goldwyn had left the company in a business dispute with his partners and board of directors, leaving his corporate name and forming his own production company nearby at the Thomas Ince Studio. The Goldwyn Pictures Corporation would still bear his name, having been coined from the names, (Samuel Goldfish) *Gold-fish* and (Edgar Selwyn) *Sel-wyn*, hence, **GOLD-WYN**.

A young French journalist named Robert Florey came to the studio to meet with the newly split company personnel and asked to be brought to the roof where the Goldwyn Sign was. Florey was to write about the company and the sign it represented. Florey said that the sign was so impressive and beautifully crafted with light bulbs placed all over that he couldn't wait to see it illuminated that night. One must understand that in 1921 the Goldwyn was the only large sign, when lit, could be seen for miles around. The studio at that time was the largest structures around making it the most prominent landmark in the area. Florey, a tourist at heart, even had a photographer take a photograph of him visiting with the sign.

1924 The Goldwyn Studios by 1923 had gotten itself into over-funding a film project that put the company in jeopardy. The film, Ben Hur, was costing the company so much in time and money that the Goldwyn board of directors merged the company with the Metro and Mayer companies that were operating in Los Angeles and Hollywood. The new merger, went into effect in April of 1924, resulting in the old Goldwyn Studios sign to be changed once again.

1924

Harry Culver's little city had grown over the years, but there was one last thing that was needed and that was a Hotel. Completed in 1924, the *Hunt Hotel* was a six-story building (the first high-rise in the city) and was located at the intersection of Main Street, Culver and Washington Boulevards. The tall structure could be seen for miles around and Harry Culver added a large steel - electric sign saying, **CULVER CITY**, due to the fact that the nearby MGM studio had the only large signage in the area. He wanted to finally make the new Hotel a Culver City landmark, with its own 'landmark' sign. Shortly thereafter, Harry Culver renamed the hotel the, *Culver City Hotel*. Throughout the history of the city, the Culver Hotel became a background for many films made there and was known internationally thanks to the distribution of films worldwide.

By the end of 1924, a new sign was built heralding the new amalgamation of the Goldwyn, Mayer and Metro companies. The new steel-electric sign said, **METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER STUDIOS** with the same 'Leo-The-Lion' hand crafted-steel logo on top. On the bottom or base of the sign a smaller sign read, **CONTROLLED BY LOEWS INC.** This was the largest sign yet and could be seen for miles around, especially at night when it dominated the Culver City skyline. The structure that supports the sign was changed from an administration office building to a Wardrobe building. But the new sign became a studio icon used in much of the company's publicity. Photographs were taken of the sign from 1924-1926 and were sent out around the world, publicizing the studio and its environs, that being Culver City. Later, the publicity department used the background of the sign to publicize new stars that were signed with MGM. In 1932, Johnny Weissmuller was welcomed to MGM by Madge Evans to begin his career as the character of 'Tarzan'. They were photographed on a rooftop with the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Sign in the background giving the sign an 'immortality' like that of the star it was publicizing.

1934

The 1930s brought MGM Studios great prosperity in a time when the entire country was going through the great Depression. New buildings were built between 1928 and 1938 which included stages, sound buildings, offices, dressing rooms and other studio support buildings. In 1933 stage 28 was constructed. It was the tallest structure in the area and was to be used for the musical numbers that could be photographed from a high vantage point. This stage, with its high 'fly' area dominated the studio lot and was the perfect place to move the old MGM Studio sign where it would command an even higher view of the entire area. It took up more room than the rooftop could accommodate, with the edges of the sign hanging over the edge of the building. This sign now would command landmark status over the area for the next fifty-two years.

- 1929
stage
6

1969

By this time the sign went through another change with the removal of the *Controlled by Loews Incorporated* sign at the base. With this removal came the end of an era of MGM dominance as a major motion picture studio. Shortly thereafter, in 1970, the new controlling company auctioned off most of the company's assets and threatening to move MGM out of Culver City altogether.

1986

In an article in the Los Angeles Times it was announced that any potential developers of the old MGM lot would have to keep it as a motion picture studio. The article was accompanied by a photograph of the MGM sign announcing the film, *"Poltergeist II"*. When articles were written over the years about the MGM studio, photographs of the MGM Sign were used because people considered the 'sign' a symbol of the studio and Culver City. The article went on to say that MGM was a valuable piece of Culver City Real Estate and that Culver City's motto is *"The Heart of Screenland"* and the studio as an integral part of the City and its history.

In July Variety reported that Lorimar-Telepictures who recently purchased the MGM studios, could remove the MGM Sign atop the facility, but it could not replace it with one of its own. The article went on to say that "rooftop signs are banned in Culver City, but MGM was granted an exception when its marquee was declared a sign of *Historical Significance*...the rooftop remains a captive of history."

By November the *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer* Sign, "A landmark atop the studio in Culver City since 1924, was replaced by a new one..." as quoted under a photograph in the Los Angeles Times. In another article in the Times it was announced; *"Leo Roars His Last At The Old MGM Stand...Culver City Sound Stages lose some old Trademarks and take on a new identity with new owners."* The article in the Times went on to say that workmen were removing the last letter of the 'landmark' 105-foot wide MGM sign. The removal of the sign and the famous mascot-logo, "Leo The Lion" from the facility drew emotional responses from long time residents of Culver City as well as others who live in Los Angeles and who care about the symbol of MGM and of Culver City being removed.

1987

After MGM moved from their studio lot after the facility was sold to the Lorimar Company, the MGM Sign was put into storage until a new place could be found for it. MGM personnel moved next-door to the newly constructed Film Corp Building with possible plans to place the sign on its rooftop. In an article in the Culver City News it was said that MGM Studios would ask the Culver City Planning Commission to approve a plan to move the historic studio sign to the roof of the Filmland Building. The sign with its famed lion caught in mid-roar, had been declared a historic monument, as reported by assistant city planner Joseph Montoya. The planning group gave the permission needed to relocate the sign based on the motto of Culver City as being "*The Heart of Screenland*" and attracting business to the community on the presence of MGM...a City Councilmember said that "I would like to keep the sign in the city. It's been here for over 60 years and it's beneficial for the 'Heart of Screenland'." The article went on to say that the sign would extend above the Filmland building roof by about 50 feet.

By March of 1987, Culver City approved the moving of the MGM Sign to the new Filmland Building across the street from the old studio site and in May the old sign was re-installed. In June it was announced in the media that "Leo The Lion" was roaring again atop the MGM Filmland Center in Culver City. The MGM sign now was even higher than it has ever been in its 64 year history, continuing its 'landmark' status in the area. For many years, after the San Diego Freeway and Santa Monica Freeways were built, drivers could see the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer sign, marking where Culver City is in the congestion of the area. Without the sign it would be hard to locate where the City was. In an article in the Hollywood Reporter and other trade magazines in June, it was reported that MGM's legendary Leo The Lion once again ruled the skies above Culver City, following a spectacular ceremony to relight the heralded MGM sign above the company's new Filmland Center headquarters. The article went on to say that actor Gene Kelly was on hand for the emotional evening ceremony, as he jointly triggered a brilliant cascade of fireworks that climbed Filmland's tiered balconies in rapid succession. *"To the nostalgic strains of "That's Entertainment", the 2 1/2 minute shower of sparks culminated when MGM's landmark sign, which had been unceremoniously removed by Lorimar".* The MGM sign was illuminated in spotlights and neon atop MGM's new home for the first time...also featured was a touching appearance by the real Leo The Lion..*"The MGM Sign and MGM Name have always stood for the best in entertainment. This is as true today as it was some 60 years ago..one of the critical components of that growth will be the partnership of the company with its home community, Culver City...After all! the MGM Sign belongs here...MGM and CULVER CITY are one!"*

- 1992 In an article from the Hollywood Reporter on November 16th, it was announced that; "*Culver City loses lion's share...MGM's move west to Santa Monica very attractive financial deal.*" The article went on to say that MGM will move to a new headquarters in Santa Monica. On November 14th 1992, the MGM Sign was again removed from the roof of the Filmland Corporate Center, home to MGM for the past few years and will be put into storage until it is re-installed over the new MGM headquarters at 2500 Broadway in Santa Monica.
- 2000 With the coming of the new century, the MGM Company would like to see their landmark sign be placed over their new headquarters in Santa Monica. The sign is not 'just a sign' but an historical artifact that reflects the history of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studio and the city where it was born. The sign is still in storage and hopefully will be resurrected again, continuing the tradition of MGM for all to admire.

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