The best art shows on Disney Plus – and 6 great documentaries it's missing

The House of Mouse may be best known today for owning mainstream behemoths like Pixar, Fox and Marvel, but that isn't to say the corporation is defined solely by big brands and money. After all, it did make its name with some of the most innovative animation of the 20th century, and continues to inspire creativity in everything from cartoons to CGI.

To prove this, cast an eye over the informative selection on offer from Disney Plus. While the streaming service is already big news due to those aforementioned properties, there are some great artistic documentaries on the platform that provide a great insight into the creative process behind animation, 'imagineer' design and comic book art.

You'll see what we mean in our roundup of the best of these Disney+ shows, which you can sample for yourself with that 7 day free trial you've been hearing all about.

Following our top 5 choices you'll find other great Disney art shows which have yet to make the jump from DVD extras to streaming; these classic documentaries would be great for creatives to stream after a National Geographic binge. It's possible this handful of missing gems may be added soon to the Disney library – although some of the more controversial choices may be forever locked in the Vault of Walt (read on to see what we mean!)

6 Best Creative Documentaries

streaming on Disney Plus

The Imagineering Story



Image from Disney+

On first glance *The Imagineering Story* seems to be all about how the Disneyland empire was built up from the US to Hong Kong, but its greatness lies in the creative details behind the fabrication of each theme park.

An ‘imagineer’ is Disney’s term for someone who dreams up then creates concepts and tech for them, so we’re talking everything from set design to animatronics, to costumes and all things VR-AR-MR-XR.

Over six episodes we explore the world of Disney’s theme park attractions, from Walt’s conception right through to the present day. Cut down from what was originally meant to be a feature-length release, the tale of *The Imagineering Story* is at times a sprawling but cohesive one.

Frank and Ollie

Frank and Ollie charts the life and careers of Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, two chief animators at Walt Disney Animation Studios from its early years until their retirement in the 1970s.

Released in 1995, the documentary was well-hidden for a while until its recent resurgence on Disney+ showed viewers a rare glimpe into the animation process from someone other than Walt.

Particularly highlighted by the film is the importance of acting to animation: you'll see the two gentleman act out a scene from a classic Disney film of theirs like *The Jungle Book*, contrasted then with the animated scene. Such a process was arguably tantamount to their success at the studio, and well worth keeping in mind when working on your next cartoon short.

Marvel 75 Years: From Pulp to Pop!



Screenshot from the doc

Know Stan Lee but not Steve Ditko? Educate yourself then with *Marvel 75 Years: From Pulp to Pop!,* the 2014 documentary which charts the history of the Marvel Universe from its humble beginnings to the birth of The Marvel Age in the 1960s and its 2010s domination of Hollywood cinema.

This special takes a look at Marvel's roots, beginning in 1939 as Timely Comics with Martin Goodman and Stan Lee emerging as key figures along with the creation of Captain America, the impact of World War II and the subsequent downfall of the comic book industry in the 1950s.

After a decade of decline, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created the modern super hero team in 1961 with the Fantastic Four, helping to bring back superhero stories and ushering in 'The Marvel Age,' which saw the creation of the Hulk, Iron Man, The X-Men and Spider-Man.

With key interviews from all the key players plus mega-fans who knew Marvel long before the MCU began, it's a roller-coaster tale, not shying away from that bleak 1990s period when the company fell into bankruptcy.

Creativity is all well and good, but so is good business after all.

Walt & El Grupo

This obscure doc tells the story of Walt Disney's 1940s U.S. Government sponsored trip to Latin and South America where he and a group of artists (the 'El Grupo' of the title) gathered material which would be used to create two further obscure feature films by the name of *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros*.

While we see Walt and gang enjoy themselves abroad, there's also a lot of scenes of sketching with the obviously very inspired-troupe of animators. The whole doc is an ode to the

beauty of the muse and creativity, along with the glory of Latin America.

Waking Sleeping Beauty



No, it’s not a film about the dozing princess, but a history of a time referred to as the Disney Renaissance.

Sounds positive, but this documentary isn’t one that follows the party line: using no new on-camera interviews, it’s instead made up of archival interviews, press footage, rough footage from the movies being covered, plus personal films shot by Disney employees on the sly.

This makes for a candid look at a time when Disney was being bludgeoned by Don Bluth, and animation was considered a dying art. It took *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* and *The Little Mermaid* to kick start the renaissance, and the surprising use of a gong to greenlight winning film ideas, quiz show-style!

The Pixar Story



From the same director behind *The Imagineering Story* is this best of all the films you can watch on Pixar's history.

Previously only available on limited edition DVDs, *The Pixar Story* is the place to start if you want to know not just about Pixar but also the history of CG animation itself.

Now onto our rundown of lost Disney docs *not* currently available in any territories on the Disney streaming service.

6 missing Disney documentaries we want to watch on Disney Plus

A Trip Through the Walt Disney Studios

Made in 1937, this is one of the oldest Disney docs out there, and with it only being included on a few select DVDs, one of the least well-known.

We like it for giving a backstage tour of the Walt Disney Studios back at the very beginning, when *Snow White* was being made and Mickey Mouse was still drawn with a grease pencil.

Let’s hope it comes to Disney+ soon.



The House of Mouse

The Making of … DVD extras

We’re not sure why these are missing currently, but we’d like to see the *Making of* documentaries behind the true Disney classics of ***Snow White, Bambi, Fantasia*** and ***Pinocchio***. You can find these enlightening movies as extras on physical releases, but Disney+ has yet to include these four in its digital library (along with any other Making Of featurettes.)

The Sweatbox

This is the one Disney doesn’t want you to see, a textbook example of the pain creative differences can bring. Edited versions have been shown a handful of times at film fests, while a heavily-truncated version appears on a home release of

the film whose creation it charts, *The Emperor's New Groove*.

The Sweatbox follows the production process of *The Emperor* back in 1997 when the 2000 movie was known as *Kingdom of the Sun*. Documentarian Trudie Styler was at the project's start with her husband Sting on music duties; we watch the singer's dismay as the movie is changed beyond recognition (alongside that of the very disappointed animators who got the film half-made before execs tore it to shreds).

The full 95-minute ordeal was leaked online in 2012, and that's probably the last we'll ever see of it; Disney owns all rights to the feature and probably doesn't want to remind people how creatively hamstrung it was in the late 1990s, when it allowed itself to be leapfrogged by the likes of Dreamworks.

Related: Learn Disney's 12 rules of animation from these GIFs

https://www.digitalartsonline.co.uk/features/illustration/best-art-shows-on-disney-plus-5-great-documentaries-its-missing/