

Walt Disney Company

Lost 1927 Disney Christmas film found in Norway

The film, an almost complete version of Empty Socks, was discovered during an inventory at the library's facility in Mo i Rana, near the Arctic circle

Agence France-Presse in Oslo

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A copy of the animated short film from Walt Disney Christmas series Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. Photograph: Martin Weiss/AFP/Getty Images

A copy of a 1927 Walt Disney cartoon which was thought to be lost has been found in northern Norway, the country's National Library said Thursday.

The film - an almost complete version of Empty Socks, the first Christmas film by the US entertainment giant - was discovered during an inventory at the library's facility in Mo i Rana, near the Arctic circle.

"At the beginning, we didn't know it was a lost cinematographic treasure," Kvale Soerensen, an archivist at the library, said in a statement.

"The film was in two reels which weren't clearly labelled."

The original version of Empty Socks had a duration of 5:30 minutes, but between 30 and 60 seconds from the central part were missing in the footage found in Norway, which was authenticated by Disney cartoonist David Gerstein.

The film stars Oswald, the Lucky Rabbit, a predecessor of Mickey Mouse who appeared in 26 movies by Walt Disney and his countryman Ub Iwerks.

The National Library said it had digitised it and sent a copy to The Walt Disney Company.

Before this find, the only known copy of Empty Socks was a 25-second sequence preserved at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

The Norwegian film originally belonged to a private individual, before ending up in the collection of the Norwegian Film Institute, which handed over its archive to the National Library of Norway.

Most of the library's works and documents are kept in a high-security bunker in Mo i Rana.

According to Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten, the nitrocellulose reels - a highly flammable compound - are stored in a room with controlled temperature and humidity.

The National Library has launched a large digitisation project to make its collection more accessible, which has helped discover lost documents.

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Featured comment

Actually, that picture was taken at the very beginning of the restoration process (or rather: reconstruction process, as we prefer to call it). My colleague Eivind had just unpacked the film and went through it almost frame-by frame to spot for potential problems, and then fixed them tediously one-by-one.

After that we scanned the film in over 4K, and then made a copy with the so-called wet gate system, which gets rid of many scratches and dust. The copy we thus produced, was again scanned in over 4k.



Martin Weiss 12 Dec 2014

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