

# Friz Freleng

Cartoonist and Film Animator  
1905-1995

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by Dory DeAngelo

Friz Freleng admitted that he rather looked like his cartoon creation, 'Yosemite Sam.' "I'm small and I used to have a red mustache," he said. As the head animator and director of the Warner Brothers' cartoon department, Freleng was responsible for the Merrie Melodies and Looney Tunes cartoon series. He had a hand in bringing to life Porky Pig, Bugs Bunny, Tweety Bird, Sylvester Puddy Cat, Daffy Duck, Speedy Gonzalez, and a cast of cartoon characters that brought laughs to movie audiences around the world.

Friz (Isadore) Freleng was born in Kansas City and attended Westport High School, where he drew cartoons for the school's publications from 1919 to 1923. To earn extra money, he worked as a caddy at the Kansas City Country Club. He had a natural talent for cartooning and was completely self taught. While still in high school, he worked for the United Film Service at 24<sup>th</sup> and Charlotte Streets, along with Walt Disney, U.B. Iwerks, and other local cartoonists. When Disney moved to Hollywood and started making cartoons, he sent for Freleng and some of his other fellow workers.

Freleng worked for Disney on cartoons that featured Oswald, The Lucky Rabbit. He joined the Warner Brothers cartoon department in 1931 and had become the director of animation by 1933. He worked with Warner Brothers for 30 years. More than 260 Warner Brothers cartoons bear Freleng's name as animator or director. He was called the most prolific of the studio's animators and his cartoons consistently won Academy Awards. After Warner Brothers quit making cartoons in 1963, Freleng and an associate formed DePatie-Freleng to produce the Pink Panther television series and other television cartoon specials.

Freleng's fans range from senior citizens to toddlers. Because the popularity of cartoons today on cable television channels, moviegoers who remember laughing at Freleng's works can revisit Bugs, Daffy, Sam, Sylvester, and others. These cartoons are now being discovered by new generations who may not know Freleng's name but recognize his legacy.



**SOURCES**

Beck, Jerry and Will Friedwald. *Warner Brothers Animation Art*. New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, 1997.

Horn, Maurice, ed. *The World Encyclopedia of Cartoons*. Detroit: Gale Research Co.,1980.

*The Kansas City Star*, 20 August 1946; 4 June 1972.

*The New York Times*, 28 May 1995.

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