The Trump in the Movies up to 1997
by Frederick Crane

If you’re like me, there’s a little sensor built into your nervous system that, whenever the slightest hint of that unique sound of a trump is detected, in a recording, on radio, on TV, in a movie, switches into full command mode, shutting off all irrelevant signals—other sights and sounds, including whatever pressing matters your spouse is trying to talk to you about—and focuses your entire consciousness on that sound.

The utter uniqueness of the trump’s sound helps. Guitars, lutes, and mandolins all sound somewhat alike; pipe organs, reed organs, and electronic organs are similar to a degree; but nothing sounds like the trump.

Combine such an alertness to the trump’s sound with a lifelong compulsion to make files, and you’ve pretty much got me pegged. What follows is merely the disgorging of the contents of my TRUMP IN THE MOVIES file.

I have distributed these ninety-odd films into six categories: Animated Cartoons, Westerns, Modern Rural Settings, Comedy, Drama and Biography, and Documentaries and Instruction. These will be discussed in turn, followed by my conclusions and a checklist of films. Not all of these titles can easily be categorized; I don’t guarantee that I’ve got it right. And there are quite a few films that I have not seen or have seen only in part; the discussion of these will be brief.

Animated Cartoons

If the trump hadn’t already existed, it would have to have been invented for the sake of the animated cartoon. The genre would be in a sad state indeed if it did not have the boings, boioings, and boioioings of the trump to provide the perfect aural counterpart to the visual hops, jumps, bounces, and collisions; coconuts falling on heads; the slingshot effect of persons and critters hurled into taut wires and ropes; the release of jacks-in-boxes; pogo sticks, frogs, rabbits, kangaroos; and every other action that the impressively vivid imaginations of those animators and music directors could associate with the sound of the trump.

In the broad context, the trump boing is only one of a giant array of sound effects used in the ‘toons. All kinds of percussion instruments are also used for situations similar to those that may call for trump boings. Notable are the low-pitched kettledrum boings, used especially when the bouncing or colliding object or person is large. But this sound lacks the trump’s cachet.

Are we talking cinematic cliché here? No. I maintain that these trump associations are mystical, inevitable, Jungianly rooted somewhere in the depths of the human psyche. Certainly, they have spread beyond the genre of the animated cartoon: they turn up in the sound tracks of live films in the same contexts as in the cartoons; one hears them again and again in TV advertising.

Before coming to the films themselves, a small disquisition on the word boing is appropriate. Boing is indisputably onomatopoetic: the plosive b starts it off as suddenly as does the action of plucking; this is followed by the vowel o, representing a low-pitched formant, and by i, representing a very quick motion to a high pitch; the final ng is harder to account for, except possibly as a representation of the extinction of the sound in the time it takes to say the word. J. E. Lighter’s Random House
Dictionary of American Slang, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1994), 222, says, The sound is understood to imitate that of a tightly wound spring suddenly unwinding. The OED, Second Ed., has it similarly. This notion is imprecise, however, as such a spring would not quickly move from low to high, but rather only from loud to soft. Boing is closely related to several South European names for the trumpet, such as Portuguese biabon and Spanish pio poyo, that imitate the rapid change of pitch. Other instruments that produce such boings are the pedal kettledrum already mentioned, and the flexatone, both of which are sometimes used for sound effects much in the same way as the trump. The earliest use of the word in Lighter or the OED is from the 1948 film Fighter Squadron: Boing! the old lady hasn't talked to me since." The Dictionary of American Slang, 2nd ed., by Harold Wentworth and Stuart Flexner (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975) attributes the word to originally and mainly wide W.W.II Armed Forces use, but without any quotations from that time. Most of the three dictionaries' quotations seem to be derived from the concept of cartoon boings, especially as eype-popping reaction the the sudden appearance of a sexy babe.

I will leave it to some less defatigable researcher than myself to determine when and in what cartoon the first trump boing appeared, and who the certifiable genius was who first thought of it. It will probably never be known, the cartoons of the late 20s and the 30s being numbered as the sands of the seashore. Certainly, there was not much delay between the first animated cartoon with sound, Walt Disney's Steamboat Willie of 1928, and the first boinging cartoons I have been able to find. These are two Warner Brothers/Vitaphone Merrie Melodies from 1931, Freddy the Freshman and Red-Headed Baby. In some early cartoon sound tracks, it is entirely possible that the boinglike sounds have been produced by a spring mounted on a resonator. But in these two films, the boings could only have come from a trump. The most notable moment in these is during a game in Freddy the Freshman, as a pig football player swallows the kicked ball and it bounces around inside him to the sound of multiple boings.

Most cartoons feature only one or a few boings; there is no point in listing these. I'll just mention one nice example, The Worm Turns, a 1936 Technicolor film in which Mickey Mouse is cast against type as a mad scientist. There is a very satisfactory boing as Mickey's dog Pluto runs into a wall, and several brief ones as the dogcatcher’s net hits the ground as he tries to capture Pluto.

But among all the little cartoons with their routine boings, there stand out a few trumpically splendidiferous works. The 1935 Max Fleischer one-reeler The Kids in the Shoe is based on the nursery rhyme There was an old woman who lived in a shoe. The film follows the original story line closely up to the point where the old woman puts the children to bed. But as soon as she has gone to bed herself, the naughty kids break into a marvelously jazzy and raunchy-voiced version of Mama Don't Allow." One of the kids pulls out a trump, and sings and plays the chorus

Now she don't allow no Jew's harp in here;
No, she don't allow no Jew's harp in here.
But I don't care what she don't allow,
Just play my Jew's harp anyhow.

At this point the kid flips aside his mattress, and plays the rest of the solo on his bedsprings. This 25-second sequence is one of the hottest trump solos of all time. I'd love to know who the unidentified performers are!

The cinematic apotheosis of the boing came in 1950 with Gerald McBoing Boing. This highly innovative cartoon, with narrative text by Dr. Seuss and music by the noted American composer Gail Kubik, tells the story of little Gerald, who can speak only in sound effects. It is full of boings, and has a wealth of other sound effects, as well. The boings have a sort of strange sound, but most of them could have been produced only on a trump. Nicolas Slo-nimsky says, in Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, 8th ed. (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992), p. 975, that Kubik's score
"launched a vogue of twangy rhinogenic tunes in popular music." This assertion would be hard to prove; in any case, Gerald was followed with several other United Productions of America cartoons featuring the title character.

In the Peanuts comic strip, Snoopy the beagle plays the trump from time to time, as he does also in at least two of the animated versions. A Boy Named Charlie Brown (1969) is the only film I know of in which trumping plays a vital part in the plot. Charlie is preparing for a spelling bee; in an extended sequence, Snoopy plays his trump as Charlie is cramming his head with spelling rules. Then at the crucial point in the bee, Charlie is about to fail at the word perceive, when he hears Snoopy outside the window playing the rhythm that went with the i before e except after c rule, and Charlie gets it right. Later, Snoopy plays extended solos on the bus to and from the national spelling bee (at which he is unable to save Charlie from defeat over the word beagle).

Snoopy, Come Home (1972) is a musical in animated cartoon form. In one memorable scene, Snoopy and his bird friend Woodstock are camping, and break into impromptu music-making, whistling, hitting pans with spoons, and Snoopy taking his trump out of his pack and playing on it, as they dance around.

**Westerns**

The largest category of films that have trumping is that of the westerns, though, surprisingly, serious dramas are not far behind. The justification for including the trump sound in the sound track, and not infrequently for showing a trumper on the screen, is obvious: the trump was a regular part of the aural landscape on the American frontier. This is one of those things that everybody knows, even though the documentation is elusive. Mark Twain mentions the instrument, if his novels can be considered frontier literature; trumps were common Indian trade goods. The strongest evidence is probably that trumps are pretty much ubiquitous among objects excavated at frontier forts. But the popularity of the trump in western movies is possibly explained by the timing: sound came to the movies at a time when the trump was a very common feature of country and western recordings; the association could be taken for granted, whether or not there was any historical foundation for it. On the other hand, trumping in westerns seems to be rare before the 1950s, by which time country and western music disdained the instrument; it is only in films of the 60s and 70s that it becomes really prominent.

A few generalizations can be ventured. Trumping seems to be absent in run-of-the-mill westerns, the sort that Hollywood cranked out by the hundreds on hundreds in the 30s and 40s. The trump is a natural for comedy westerns, and is a common feature of them, but on the opposite end of the scale, I am amazed to note that the sweet little trump appears very often in the most bloody and violent of westerns. I can guess at no reason for this, except that filmmakers are perverse creatures (just like pretty much everybody in the world but me). And there must be some reason why Jack Elam is in so many westerns with trumping; perhaps his contract demanded it; perhaps he was in every western made from the 1950s through the 1980s (actually, he was--I just looked up his credits); Elam was equally great at playing comic characters and thoroughly evil ones. A few other actors appear in multiple trump-featuring westerns, such as Bruce Dern, Joan Hackett, and James Garner. Director John Ford may also have had a leaning towards trumps.

The Arizonian of 1935 is the earliest western in which I have found any trumping, and it's one of my favorites. In one scene, Willie Best, playing his standard character (which he was really good at, but avoid his films if you are put off by political incorrectness), plays the trump for about a whole minute, and later, he joins in with a dance orchestra.
In The Plainsman of 1936, Gary Cooper plays Wild Bill Hickock, and Jean Arthur is too pretty as Calamity Jane, but this is Hollywood, and has nothing to do with historical accuracy. In one scene, as Arthur is tending bar in Deadwood, Oh, Susannah is heard in the soundtrack, the tune played by a banjo and a trumpet. Curiously, Wild Bill, the latest trump western I have seen, is also about Wild Bill and Calamity, and also features the trumpet with string-band instruments.

There’s a 15-year gap in my list after these two films, for whatever reason. But the next one is a doozie, with what is probably my favorite trumpet scene in all the history of the cinema. Across the Wide Missouri (1951) is set in the Rockies in 1829. In one scene, Clark Gable pulls out his trumpet, and performs the incredible feat of playing Skip to My Lou on it very competently while holding it an inch or two in front of his mouth and simultaneously singing. Immediately following this, there is a rendezvous dance of mountain men, for which the orchestra is a trumpet, a jug, and a concertina. In the extended dance, the orchestra alternates Devil’s Dream with "Durang"; these guys may look like frontier ruffians, but they are outstanding players, and very sophisticated musicians. The dance, and the memorable brawl that follows it, are played for comedy. Later, Gable repeats his repertory for his beautiful Indian wife María Elena Marqués, after which he lays his trumpet down on the log he has been sitting on, and Marqués picks it up and plays it with the same technique, but not knowing any English, gets the words thoroughly garbled.

The stunning four-star musical Seven Brides for Seven Brothers is set in Oregon Territory in 1850. Shortly after the beginning, a man is playing the trumpet, tunelessly, as Howard Keel enters a bar for lunch. Later, the trumpet is heard in the background music that introduces the barn-raising dance, and it appears again soon in the memorable fight that ensues between the brothers and the town men. The whole sequence is one of the high points of the entire genre of the movie musical.

The Far Horizons (1955) is the fictionalized account of the Lewis and Clark expedition (Donna Reed as Sacajawea? Gimme a break!). Not inappropriately, when the boatmen dance, the music is a trumpet.

The Unforgiven (1959) is set on the Texas frontier before the Civil War (Audrey Hepburn as an Indian? Gimme a break!). As Burt Lancaster, Lillian Gish, and family are hosting the neighbors at dinner, Gish on the piano, neighbor boy Arnold Merritt on the trumpet, an unseen personage on a harmonica, and handclappers strike up Turkey in the Straw, while two young couples join for an impromptu dance.

Way ahead of any of these films so far for violence is For a Few Dollars More (1965), but in compensation there is the memorable score by Ennio Morricone. During the opening credits, trumps are used in a way I have not observed in any other movie: trumps in several different pitches trade off, so as to agree with the changing harmonies. Later, there are isolated single trumpet tones, especially, it appears, at moments of great tension in the drama. I do not detect the sound of trumps in the other famous Eastwood-Leone-Morricone spaghetti westerns A Fistful of Dollars and The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.

The comedy western Cat Ballou of 1965, set in Wyoming in 1894, uses the trumpet in a way possibly paying tribute to the animated cartoon, and which will be taken up rather often in later examples of the genre. The trumpet here produces whimsical sounds, as sound effects, and over the music, but not a part of it, to point up the on-screen action; in this case, it is actually dramatic moments, not funny ones, that are given this trumpic emphasis.

In the not bad 1966 remake of Stagecoach, set in the really good frontier decade, the 1870s, there is quite a bit of trumping. The trumpet appears prominently with the orchestra in the opening credits and the final credits, and at several points between, always rhythmic and tuneless.
In 1968's Bandolero! (there's nothing like an exclamation point at the end of the title if you want to give the message that this is a must-see movie), Jimmy Stewart and Dean Martin play vicious outlaws (no, it's not a comedy, either) who take Raquel Welch hostage for a flight into Mexico to escape sheriff George Kennedy. There are three pretty good trumping passages; the excellent music is traditional western fare, but with some modernist touches; the trumping consists more of rhythmic boings than of melody.

In Will Penny (1968), the desperados who have captured Charlton Heston and Joan Hackett play Rakes [Rigs] of Mallow a.k.a. Romping Molly on trump and harmonica for dancing with the terrified and unwilling Hackett. The trump's sound is only haphazardly matched by the on-screen plucking; naive me--I always thought movie sounds were recorded at the same time as the film was being shot; the revelation of the truth hit me worse than when they told me there wasn't really a tooth fairy.

There's just a little bit of trumping as ironic comment in Young Billy Young (1969), as Robert Mitchum warns stranger Robert Walker not to water his jackass, Walker ignores the warning, and he and jackass are stuck in quicksand.

One or a few trump tones as wry comment, almost animated cartoon-style, have been pioneered in For a Few Dollars More, Cat Ballou, and Young Billy Young. But I feel that it must have been Jeff Alexander's scoring for the instrument in the wonderful frontier comedy Support Your Local Sheriff! of 1969 that set off the flood of trumping in 1970s westerns, especially of the comical type. The film is full of shorter and longer bits of trumping. In the opening credits, it joins the orchestra for the lively music that accompanies a gold rush. Single tones or short riffs function better than any TV laugh track, and infinitely more subtly, during the mle in the mud; as Joan Hackett hides in a tree so that James Garner won't see her in her muddy long johns; when Bruce Dern (brilliant as a murderer who is simultaneously vicious and ridiculous) discovers that Garner has tricked him into surrendering; when the supposedly dud cannon goes off, and Dern faints, to a single wobbly trump tone.

I'll pass more quickly over the comedy westerns that followed: The Ballad of Cable Hogue (1970), Dirty Dingus Magee (1971), with another imaginatively trumpful score by Jeff Alexander, Blazing Saddles (1974), The Apple Dumpling Gang (1975), with a better-than usual trumpist, The Duchess and the Dirtwater Fox (1976), The Kid from Not-So-Big (1978), The New Maverick (1978), Butch and Sundance: The Early Days (1979), Cattle Annie and Little Britches (1980), and the TV movie Bret Maverick: The Lazy Ace (1981). Collectively, these have quite a bit of those ironic comments by the trump, and also often use the trump as part of old-timey or bluegrass-like bands.

The same era brought a spate of western dramas. Bloody they may be, but all their screenwriters want you to know that they've read their Shakespeare, so there's comic relief aplenty. Rio Lobo (1970), has a notable trumping scene. Shortly after John Wayne and his friends take over the jail, Jack Elam takes out a trumpet and plays it, pretty incoherently.

Wayne: Mr. Phillips--is that the only tune you know?
Elam: I don’t know this’n. That’s why I keep practicin’. Continues trumping at length.
Wayne: Mr. Phillips, is there any way of gettin’ you to stop that?
Elam: He [the prisoner] don’t get no beer, does he?
Wayne: Neither do you, unless you promise not to play that harp.
Elam: I’ll stop. He stops.
Benny Carter’s music for Buck and the Preacher (1972), a western almost unique in featuring blacks, is highly distinctive: avant-garde, even atonal except for some bluesy passages. The sparse, chamber instrumentation features harmonicas, percussion, and remarkably much of the time, trumpet. I count seven musical sequences scattered through the movie in which the trumpet is very prominent. The music it plays is never melodic, but rhythmic with glisses.

On a scale of 10, Santee (1973) rates an 8 or 9 for bloody violence. In a humorous scene halfway through, Michael Burns tries roping a calf and riding a bucking horse, to the accompaniment of lively bluegrass music of strings, drums, banjo, and a trump as rhythm instrument.

Michael Franks's music for Zandy's Bride (1974) consists of many short pieces for a small country ensemble or a single instrument; the trumpet is heard in four of these, playing sparse single tones.

In the middle of the satisfyingly bloody (hey, get off my back--I’m being ironic) 1975 film Posse, dancing celebrates the capture of outlaw Bruce Dern (who has deservedly had almost as much work as Jack Elam), to a string band with trumpet, seen on the screen.

In two sequences in Across the Great Divide (1977), an orchestra with some country-type instruments including an effectively used trumpet sets the mood near the beginning, as a posse chases an anti-hero Robert Logan, and later, as animals frolic.

Mountain-men movies have to feature rendezvous with wild dancing and brawling, as in The Mountain Men (1980). The pickup band here consists of three trumps, a concertina, a guitar, harmonicas, and fiddles; they are playing Buffalo Gals. Just a bit of anachronism here--as the date is about the 1830s, the harmonica and the song will not come along for another ten or fifteen years. Well, Leonard Maltin rates it as a bomb, probably on account of the shoddy research.

If you like blood and violence, and why else watch westerns?, Tom Horn, a 1980 movie based on the final doings of a real-life personage in 1901 Wyoming, has a kind of unique trumping scene. Early in the movie, as Tom (Steve McQueen) and his boss Richard Farnsworth approach, some cattle rustlers are playing dance music with trumpet, guitar, and two fiddles. The trumpist assumes an aggressive stance; they demand that Farnsworth dance, and shoot at the ground near his feet to persuade him (oh, oh--cliché time!), whereupon McQueen shoots the rustler in the foot, bringing a quick end to the dance. So here’s another rare case of the trumpet, out of character, as an effective tool of aggression.

A notable trend of the last 20 years or so is that the folks who are in charge of American popular culture have determined that to keep the public’s attention, one must push the extremes always a little more. In the movies, this boils down to ever more spectacular special effects and ever more graphic violence. The Long Riders (1980), Silverado (1985), and Wild Bill (1995) are cases in point, all with enough flying blood and body parts to make anybody take notice. I think I have a strong stomach (the only thing I can’t stand under any circumstances is Barbara Walters), but I guarantee that I would never watch these films if it weren’t to check out the trumping. The Long Riders is the story of the James and Younger brothers, c. 1866-1882. It has quite a bit of trumping, first in the music for a wedding dance with country band of fiddle, guitar, banjo, spoons, and trumpet (seen as well as heard), which lasts about eight minutes. Particularly notable, though, is the brothers’ train trip to their Waterloo at Northfield, Minnesota, during which Robert Carradine as Bob Younger plays "The Girl I Left Behind Me" for a full two minutes.

In Silverado, a festive gathering of farmers dance to a band of trumpet, fiddle, guitar, accordion, and handclapping.
Wild Bill is the dramatized story of Wild Bill Hickock’s last years, 1867-1876. The music is largely arrangements of western and other 19th-century songs for string band. The several appearances of the trump are in varied, mood-setting arrangements. After all this research, I’m still wallowing in mystifications. Near the end, Wild Bill wipes out most of his enemies in a few seconds. My question: how does he fire exactly 24 shots from his two six-shooters without reloading? Another mystery of the same order: anyone who watches westerns knows that stagecoaches are invariably pulled by horses in full gallop; how did they keep this up for miles and miles from one station to the next, without a lot of horses dying from exhaustion? And when a villain or Indian is shot dead, why does the horse he is riding fall down, too, without exception? I do know why movie stagecoach wheels always rotate backwards, but I’m not going to explain it here, because it involves calculus.

Modern Rural Settings
The role of the trump is the same as in the westerns: realism. Hillbillies, bayou dwellers, and other country folk love that twangin’!

Our Daily Bread (1934) is a Depression drama with a rural setting. In one scene, the folks make music for a dance at the farm camp. The band--violin, guitar, and an old gent on trump--play "De Camptown Races."

Just a minute into the great 1939 film version of John Steinbeck's novel Of Mice and Men, Burgess Meredith and Lon Chaney, Jr. board a boxcar, and find one of the hoboes inside playing a tune on his trump.

A year later, another four-star Steinbeck-derived film, The Grapes of Wrath, appeared with one of the most memorable trump sequences ever. Late in the movie, there is a dance in the government transient camp in California; the orchestra, seen on screen, and mostly heard, consists of fiddle, guitar, banjo, bass, mandolin, accordion, and trump, whose player is seen very briefly, flailing away. The band plays three pieces: She'll be Comin' 'Round the Mountain," in which the trumpist plays constant fast eighth-notes, "Red River Valley," and "Turkey in the Straw." The band is very convincing, as a pickup group of competent amateurs; the trumpist plays the melody throughout.

The 1991 filmed stage version of Grapes also features some trumping at several points, all in Act II, in this case by an actor who is obviously really playing it live, and pretty well, too. As in the 1940 film, the dancing is accompanied by a string band plus trump.

The comedy White Lightning (1973) stars Burt Reynolds as a moonshine delivery person, and Ned Beatty as the sheriff who is his nemesis. The trump appears several times in the sound track, appropriately for the contemporary southern setting. The trump offers Wagnerian-style comment on the action, for example in a car chase, in which it seems to symbolize Burt’s cockiness.

Lolly-Madonna XXX (1973) is a very different matter altogether, the disgustingly and gratuitously violent story of a family feud, evidently set in present-day Appalachia. Ed Lauter, as Hawk, plays the trump at two points, once for a hog audience as he fantasizes that he is a country music star. Later, the grieving Hawk tosses his fancy English trump into his brother's grave. And as he dies, he imagines the announcer saying: "That well-known Jew's harper Hawk Hudson . . ."

Manhunter is a 1974 pilot film for a TV series, set in the rural U.S. northwest. The music is partly country-style, partly orchestral art music; in both styles, the trump is heard in numerous brief sections, most often in single percussive tones. The trump seems to be a symbol of the gangster villains, who are caught or killed one by one by the title hero.
1974’s Big Bad Mama, sort of a feminist Bonnie with no Clyde, takes place in Texas in 1932. The country-style music features trumping several times, notably in the lively music that accompanies car chases. The trumping is among the best to be heard in the movies, and no wonder, for the trumpist is none other than the great Larry Hanks. Larry’s term for the movie is “cheesy”; he refuses to take any responsibility for it except the trumping.

Trumping is heard at quite a few points in Moonshine County Express (1976), a story of a hill-country moonshiners’ feud. It is prominent in the opening and closing credits, and in a two-minute car chase, always twanging rhythmically in bluegrass-style music.

In Mountain Family Robinson (1979), Robert Logan takes his family to live in a western wilderness. When Logan says, First snow on the peaks, a brief rejoicing scene breaks out, with dance music that includes the trump.

If you like your comedy to be subtle, Soggy Bottom, U.S.A. (1981) is not for you. Larry Cansler’s varied country-style music for it, however, is full of trumping, pretty imaginatively used. It is heard a little in the opening and final credits, but is prominent in no less than three chase scenes, a boat chase, an extended coon hunt, and a long, long truck chase whose music is a bluegrass version of the William Tell Overture.

Cold Feet (1989) is one of those films where everyone involved says, Let’s make a really bad movie, and then pool all their formidable talents toward that goal, successfully. I gave the video-rental clerks the reasons why they should burn it, and they said they would. The setting is Montana ranch country in the late 1970s. There is only a little trumping, in bluesy country-style music.

The very well-done 1994 TV movie Christy, set in backwoods Appalachia in 1912, has a realistic cornhusking scene in which a band of fiddles, banjo, trump, and spoons plays Turkey in the Straw.

Comedy
A few comedies—not as many as you might expect—that don’t have western or rural settings have some trumping, often, to be sure, as a leitmotiv for backwoods characters who appear in nonbackwoods contexts.

In the 1955 TV version of No Time for Sergeants, country boy Andy Griffith gives the U.S. Army fits. At the opening, Griffith is speaking; after a minute, he reaches into a shirt pocket, pulls out a trump, says Jew’s harp,” and plays in alternation with singing. Later, he plays again, and continues to hold the trump. Alas, in both cases, Griffith’s plucking is uncoordinated with the sound of the trump.

In Disney's Pete's Dragon of 1977, some trumping is heard in music associated with the backwoods villains led by Shelley Winters.

Stir Crazy (1980) is the story of the prison mishaps of (innocent) losers Gene Wilder and Richard Pryor. The effective series of boings and boioioings that are heard are occasioned by the rodeo that Wilder is forced to participate in.

The wonderful A Christmas Story is based on childhood memories from the 1940s. The trump is heard twice in the loud, lively music that accompanies the hillbilly neigh-bors’ pack of hounds, first as they greet the unappreciative Darren McGavin, and second as they invade McGavin's house and make off with the turkey.
Innerspace of 1987 is another action-science fiction-romance comedy. The trumpet is used, with great consistency, as a leitmotiv for The Cowboy (Robert Picardo), a vicious Latino fence of stolen microchips, if I've got it right, for instance in a scene in which Martin Short's face is morphed into that of The Cowboy. The trumpet sounds as though it might just possibly be not a real one, but an electronic imitation.

In Rude Awakening (1989), there is a pretty clever scene in which Cheech Marin is having a marijuana-induced fantasy in which he is faced down by a Clint Eastwood clone, to the sound of imitation Morricone music, including trumping.

At other times, the trumping is straight out of the cartoons. In It Started with Eve (1941), just two boings are heard, representing loose upholstery springs. In a similar vein, the 1945 English comedy Molly and Me, set in London in 1937, matches the scratching of a small, comical dog with the sounds of a trumpet in the same rhythm.

Mel Brooks's Silent Movie (1976) is as full of sound effects as any Looney Tune. Kettledrum boings are very numerous, but some nice trumpet boings appear in three scenes. As four men step into James Caan's trailer, it suddenly lists, with a large boing. A nice boooioioing accompanies Brooks's pulling a rubber frog out of his jacket. But the third occasion is exceptionally memorable. A sign appears: "HOTEL SLEEZE. Featuring MURPHY BEDS. Catering to the Unsophisticated." Each of the several times that the hotel sign flashes on, a boing is heard. The scene changes to a room in the hotel. Brooks enters; as he pulls down the Murphy bed, one fine, large beeng is heard; as it flips back up, it is to the sound of a boeing. If boinging is ever sophisticated, this is it.

Drama and Biography
You would think that the trumpet would be less at home in dramatic films than in other genres, but in fact many occasions are found for its use: it can provide color appropriate to an ethnic group of the present or of the past, as well as it does for rural and western America. It can be the result of historical research, as when a trumpet is put into young Abe Lincoln's mouth. As in comedy, it can accompany the appearance of rural folk in an urban setting. And, somehow, a boing or two can be as expressive of moments of high drama as of low comedy.

In the 1931 version of Huckleberry Finn, the trumpet is heard in the title sequence, a sort of country music, and in the final credits, a sort of march. Mark Twain himself must have been responsible, as his novel mentions the trumpet two or three times.

Two of those romantic musical epics starring Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy have some on-screen trumping. Naughty Marietta (1935) is set in 18th-century Louisiana. After the incognito noblewoman MacDonald and the other French girls (pardon me, that just slipped out--I mean young French women) have been rescued by a troupe of scouts, the latter make a rough music in camp; the instruments seen include a brief glimpse of a trumpet, though I didn't hear it. New Moon (1940) takes place in 1789, beginning on a ship bound from France to New Orleans. As the scene shifts from the wealthy passengers above to the prisoners in the hold, incognito nobleman Eddy sings a song, as a trumpist plays beside him.

Young Mr. Lincoln (1939) has two of my favorite trumping scenes. You should see it anyway, if you haven't already, as it's got three and a half stars. In an early scene, the date is 1837; Henry Fonda (Abe) and Eddie Collins (Efe Turner) are riding through the countryside. Fonda plays some tones on his trumpet.

"How come they call that thing you're playing a Jew's harp?"
"Comes down from David's harp in the Bible."
"I don't want to say nothin' against the Bible, but those people back there sure had funny tastes in music."

The tune Fonda is playing coalesces into Dixie. Now this is quite a bombshell, as Dixie is said by all the historians to have been composed by the minstrel Dan Emmett in 1859. This is what's called Revisionist History, as when they tell you that George Washington didn't really cut down that cherry tree or throw a dollar bill across the Potomac. Fonda's plucking and the sound as heard are only roughly coordinated. In a later scene, however, there is every appearance that he is really playing the trumpet. Here, Lincoln is sitting in front of his office window, playing "Turkey in the Straw." He is interrupted first by the sight of his future bride going by in a carriage, then by the visit of the judge, after which he resumes playing.

Here's how old I am, if you didn't already know: in my youth we always showed how hep we were by saying things like "Give me a ring on the Ameche." True. Don Ameche played the title role in The Story of Alexander Graham Bell (1939), with Henry Fonda as his assistant. When Ameche first succeeds at transmitting the pretelephone sounds of a plucked spring over a wire, it is the sound of trump boings that the audience hears. Ameche's "It works! It works! It works!" never achieved the fame of Colin Clive's "It's alive!" in Frankenstein, but it was worth a try.

I like best those films in which the actors are all beautiful and happy and treat each other nicely from beginning to end and at the end have achieved the promise of delirious happiness for all time to come. So I have been advised to avoid Ingmar Bergman films, and have managed it with great success, except that I was forced to watch The Virgin Spring (1960) for professional reasons. Ingmar must have been watching some of the nastiest of those Hollywood westerns, as his trumping scene leads into really masterful ugliness. Rich medieval Swedish farmer Max Von Sydow's sweet teenage daughter is making her way through the woods. She meets three goatherds, one of whom is playing the trumpet (very expertly). Karin: "That's a quaint thing." "It was left me by my father, who got it from his father." "May I look?" He tosses the trumpet to her, she hands it back, they have lunch, he plays some more, and the goatherds rape her and bludgeon her to death. I freaked out at this point, but I have a feeling that Max is going to find out about it and make those guys sorry.

Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors (1964), the best known work of the tragic Soviet Armenian Sergei Paradzhanov, is a film of the most striking, compelling originality in every aspect. It is also very brooding, dark, but in its artistry rising above mere adjectives. The setting is a Carpathian village in the 19th century. The originality extends to its music, partly orchestral, but much of the time coming from folk instruments, the trumpet prominent among them. At seven points spread throughout the film, the trumpet is brought in singly and in groups of three or more, sometimes only heard, but often seen, for example in the hands of several women at a funeral early in the film, and once played by protagonist Ivanko himself.

In the great Satyajit Ray's musical fantasy Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne (1969), a dance is accompanied by a percussion ensemble that includes a morsing.

The 1973 low-budget sex-obsessed science-fiction movie The Invasion of the Bee Women is redeemed a bit by the imaginative, foreboding music Charles Bernstein extracts from the trumpet. The trump is used as part of a chamber ensemble (with voices as well in the opening credits), notably in a couple of scenes in which women are converted into human queen bees in order that they could wreak vengeance on assorted males by stinging them to horrible deaths.

Scarecrow (1973) is reported to have some trumping in the sound track.
In *The Last Tycoon* (1976), in the sound track of an (unseen) 1930s comic movie, a single strategically placed vibrato boing is heard, as Robert De Niro reads bitterly disappointing news.

*Who Has Seen the Wind* (1977) is a coming-of-age drama set in a small Saskatchewan town during the De-pression. In one scene Brian Painchaud chases Douglas Junor (as young Ben) around the barnyard to lively folksy orchestral music including trump; later as old Ben (Jose Ferrer) is sentenced for bootlegging, melancholy music includes several slow melancholy trump tones.

Another exceptionally violent film that, let’s say, broadens the image of our nice little instrument, *The Emerald Forest* (1985) takes place mostly in the Brazilian jungle. Much of its original and effective score is evidently authentic Brazilian playing and singing, with native instruments and some European ones. The trump is prominent through about the last half of the film, effectively contributing to the tense atmosphere. The trump sounds just a bit different; is it possibly actually a mapup, South America’s only “trump precursor,” known in the jungle of Bolivia, near to Brazil?

*Dead Poets Society* (1989) takes place at a New England boys’ prep school in 1959. It is remembered as the movie that taught millions of aspiring upper middlebrow Americans who hadn’t actually studied Latin the meaning of *Carpe diem*. At the end of the scene in the cave in which the boys revive the titular club, a reading of Vachel Lindsay’s "The Congo" turns into a procession with rhythm band, in which one student plays a trump.

Violence again, ah me! In *Next of Kin* (1989), Kentucky hillbillies wipe out much of a Chicago crime family. Could happen. The trump is prominent in the opening credits, and a little in one scene set in Kentucky.

*December Bride* is a drama of predominantly dour Protestant Ulster villagers early in this century. Saskia Reeves is housemaid to brothers Donal McCann and Ciaran Hinds; the neighbors express disapproval when Reeves bears two children, unknown to which brother. Hinds, the dourer brother, trumps his loneliness in one scene, and later plays an Irish tune to which Reeves and McCann dance. I was pretty nonplused here, as it sounded a lot like several trumps in unison, but the final credits cleared things up:

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Jew’s harp sequence
BANISH MISFORTUNE
Played by John, Dave & Mick Wright
From THE LARK IN THE CLEAR AIR
Copyright by Topic records
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--one of my most favorite records! So we have a rare case of a movie whose trumpists are known.

In *The Godfather, Part III* (1990), a highly regarded drama about a loving family and the little setbacks they have on the road to financial success, the trump is used three times as an element of Sicilian local color--very appropriately, as the marranzano has a vital place in that island’s traditional music. Approximately the second half of the movie takes place there in 1978. The trumping seems to be real Sicilian music, first as accompaniment to a female singer, and a little later as part of a popular band, with accordion, pipe, and guitar, at a party. Still later, soft trump tones are heard over a string orchestra. Earlier, in New York, the significance of a series of rhythmic trump tones escapes me, as Eli Wallach leaves a restaurant and enters a car.

*White Fang* (1991) is based loosely on the Jack London novel, and takes place during the Klondike gold rush of 1898. Camping on the way to the gold fields, Klaus Maria Brandauer takes a trump out
of his pocket and plays a few random tones. Later, gold thieves are laying siege to Brandauer and Ethan Hawke in their cabin. Brandauer starts to play his trump.

First Desperado: That's "Comin' around the Mountain," ain't it?
Second Desperado: Hits First Desperado. I hate that song! Fires at the house.
Brandauer: That'll keep them guessing. Continues to play until thieves set fire to the cabin.

I claim that Bound (1996) is unclassifiable, but my daughter, who knows more about these things than I do, says it's a comedy. Well, damnedest comedy I ever saw! It's not my kind of movie not only on account of the blood and one of the costars having a seriously faulty voice, but because I hate obscure symbolism. It's the trumping I'm talking about—in each of two scenes, Gina Gershon, alone, plays exactly three slow tones on her trump, and it beats me why. But my daughter says it's an audiovisual figure for randiness, and she knows more about all things cinematographic than I do.

Flipper (1996) is the only movie known to me about small cetaceans, so I'm sticking it in the Drama category for company. Elijah Wood meets this pretty blonde as she is playing the trump to attract Flipper. "I'm hypnotizing him—dolphins love music." Will they be comparing early-adolescent hormones before the like as not happy ending? Well, it's a movie for kids.

Documentaries and Instruction
Evidently the people who are sensitive to such things must view the trump as more an object of fantasy than of reality, because so few films or videos that have come to my attention place the instrument in the real world. My advice: movies with such long and uncatchy titles as some of these are never going to be big box-office draws.

The estimable Eldon Rathburn has composed at latest count 222 film scores for the National Film Board of Canada over the half century from 1946 to 1996 (and several others as well), probably earning a record for quantity as well as length of career. Three of these include trumping (see also Who Has Seen the Wind, under Dramas). In all of them, the trump is a part of country- or traditional-style music appropriate to the setting or the era. In City of Gold (1957), a documentary on Dawson City and the Klondike gold rush of 1898, such music accompanies a segment on the rush by boat on the Yukon River. In Death of a Legend (1971), a documentary on the wolf, a sequence on the beaver-fur trade has a trump as obbligato to the instrumen-tal continuation of a folk song. Transitions is a 3-D big-screen IMAX film on the history of transportation in Canada, made for Vancouver’s Expo '86. In the quiet music that opens the film, single trump tones are heard; country-style music accompanies the progress of an early train.

In Bali, Distrikt Karangasem - Maultrommel-Orchester in Iseh, a short documentary of 1978, four musical pieces illustrate the technique of trump playing in Bali. The two Eipo films do about the same for this one New Guinea people.

About the clearest demonstration of the making of a trump that I have seen is the 15-minute video Making of Temir-komuz, Metal Jew's Harp of the Kyrgyz, Central Asia (1995). There are almost no spoken words; the text, in the form of Japanese subtitles, is almost superfluous. An introductory duet is followed by smith Orozobai Kenchin-baev's step-by-step demonstration; finally, Kenchinbaev expertly plays a komuz (a variety of lute) in duet with a woman on the temir-komuz.

So far, I know of only two instructional videos for the trump. In the late great Tom Bilyeu's short tape, How to Play the Jew's Harp with Tom Bilyeu (c. 1987), Rick narrates a brief, but effective introduction to playing the trump, with demonstrations by Tom. Then Tom plays three tunes, with accompaniment of guitar, bass, and drum set.
In Learn to Play the Sakha Khomus, the great Ivan Alexeyev and Spiridon Shishigin, after a brief introduction to the khomus and its worldwide cousins, effectively demonstrate a wide variety of basic Sakha techniques, and at the end play a duet improvisation.

Chawin' Chewin' Gumis a video for children on American folk music. The last item is Old Molly Hare, with trump, spoons, and clogging.

I haven't seen The JVC Video Anthology of World Music and Dance of 1988 or The New JVC Video Anthology of World Music and Dance of 1994, but can report that these large videocassette series include a good number of sequences that feature trumping, from many parts of the world. The accompanying booklets identify the contents of those tapes that include trumping.

Rasa Ernazarova's 1993 video The Trump in America is a documentary of the 1993 visit that I reported in VIM 4, 15-17, by Sakha khomusists Ivan Alexeyev and Anatoliy Gogolev. They visit and trump together with Fred Whit-low, Robbie Clement, Mike Seeger, David Holt, and (rather too much) me, entertaining rapt audiences of kids and adults on the way--all interspersed with scenes of America.

Conclusions
It's been a long ride, 'n' me 'n' Old Paint is plumb tuckered out (two slow boings). But I'm exhilarated, too, because seeing all these old cinematic friends again, and making the acquaintance of quite a few new ones, and formulating my thoughts about all of them, has been uncommonly satisfying. I'd rather let the reader draw his (or her--I'm right with you, gals women) conclusions, and I surely hope I've whetted some interest in you for seeing the best of these films, trumpwise. But I have been led to a few random musings, mostly on some of the ways in which people's doings don't quite match their aspirations.

Obviously, I've experienced some disillusionment in the course of researching and writing this study. Until now, I resolutely insisted that with all these scores of highly skilled people that you see listed in the credits (Best Boys, Gaffers, Second Assistant Music Contractors, Organological Consultants . . . ), any Hollywood film had to be about as free of visible, audible, or olfactory imperfections as anything on this earth can be. But how am I to keep my faith in the face of all those anachronisms, asynchronisms, logical impossibilities, and miscastings? One begins to succumb to skepticism, and ask: Are all those guns firing real bullets? Do all starlets really have flawless complexions? WAS CLARK GABLE REALLY PLAYING THAT TRUMP AT ALL? Well, I take comfort in reminding myself that it's not reality we're dealing with here, it's art; it's not plausibility, it's entertainment.

In the movies, as in all the other arts, but more so in the movies, when some innovation is found to work, everyone adopts it in a hurry. The trump is a good case in point. When the first sound-effects guy stuck in a boing, next week everyone was doing it. When the trump was first used to add color to a rural or western setting, droves of other Music Directors became copycats. What're ya gonna do? If the trump has been heard once, is it never to be heard again?

It would be easy for me to give the impression that the entire film industry would have collapsed long ago if it didn't have the trump to shore it up. I may believe this in my heart, but a couple of people have told me that it doesn't sound quite reasonable to them, so I won't push the idea. No--in fact most films, most cartoons, even the large majority of westerns dispense with trumping. (To the tune of "Whoopee Ti Yi Yo",:) It's their misfortune, and none of my own.
My most heartfelt thanks go to the many people who have called trump films to my attention, and especially to Brian Mihura for whole lists of them, and to William Shaman for vast amounts of cinematographica.

**A Checklist of Films and Videos with Trumping**

The listing includes all films that have come to my attention that have even a little bit of trumping in the sound track or on the screen. There are some exceptions to completeness: I have not attempted to list the very numerous animated cartoons that have a few boings. I would welcome information about any titles that are lacking here.

M: Music by. D: Director. (t): plays trump on screen. An asterisk before the title indicates a film with trump content that is very much worth seeing and hearing. I have listed all the LP and CD issues of sound track recordings that I could find out about without actually exerting myself. Most of the information on these recordings comes from Bill Shaman. We have heard very few of these; many may lack the trumping that is heard in the movie. LPs are stereo, unless otherwise noted; in the case of similar catalog numbers separated by a slash, the first is mono, the second stereo.


Chawin' Chewin' Gum" (1987 or 1988) video, 39'. Endocino, California: Lark in the Morning.


1950 Academy Award for Best Short Subject/Cartoon. Available on Columbia TriStar Home Video as Columbia Pictures Presents UPA's Gerald McBoing-Boing, Vol. 3.


The Kid from Not-So-Big. (Booming Ltd. 1978) D: William Crain. Jennifer McAllister.


Learn to Play the Jew's Harp with Tom Bilyeu. (1987?) 10m.


The New JVC Video Anthology of World Music and Dance. (1994)


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