

Wayne Allwine

Wayne Allwine, who died on May 18 aged 62, supplied the voice of Mickey Mouse in the Walt Disney cartoons for more than 30 years; his wife, Russi Taylor, is the voice of Minnie Mouse.

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Allwine joined the Walt Disney studio in 1966 when, as a school-leaver, he took a job in the post room. He went on to work in the sound effects department, and in 1977 began voicing the company's biggest cartoon star.

His distinctive falsetto can be heard in *Mickey's Christmas Carol* (1983), *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (1988), *The Prince and the Pauper* (1990) and *Mickey, Donald, Goofy: The Three Musketeers* (2004), as well as at Disney theme parks around the world.



Allwine and his wife Russi Taylor with the characters they gave voice to Photo: GETTY

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Since the mouse's first appearance in cinemas in the cartoon short *Steamboat Willie* in 1928, Allwine was only the third man to have supplied Mickey's voice. The first was Walt Disney himself; then, from 1947, it was Jimmy MacDonald, another sound effects man, who became Allwine's mentor and handed him the role after voicing the mouse for 30 years.

Wayne Anthony Allwine was born in Glendale, a suburb of Los Angeles, on February 7 1947. While a high school student in Burbank, he acted in school plays and formed his own music group, the International Singers, which performed in clubs and at colleges throughout California, and he later formed other bands.

He made his debut voicing the world's most famous mouse on *The New Mickey Mouse Club* (1977-78) and went on to supply Mickey's voice for Disney films and television specials as well as for records, toys and video games.

Allwine, who joined the Disney studios a few months before Walt Disney's death in 1966, had been working in sound effects under Jimmy MacDonald for some seven years when he was invited to an open audition for Mickey's voice after an actor failed to turn up. Having watched *The Mickey Mouse Club* on American television as a child in the 1950s he simply conjured up Mickey's voice from memory.

Allwine later said that producing the famous falsetto of the ever-optimistic Mickey was easy for him. "Actually, I was accustomed to doing vocal stuff," he told an interviewer in 1997. "My father was a barbershop quartet singer.

He was a high tenor with an odd voice and could go from lower range to upper range without cracking his voice. I inherited that."

Allwine's credits as a sound effects editor for Disney included *Splash* (1984) and *Three Men and a Baby* (1987); for other studios he worked on *Innerspace* (1987), *Alien Nation* (1988) and *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*. In 1986 he shared an Emmy for his sound editing on Steven Spielberg's NBC television series *Amazing Stories*.

In 1991 Allwine married his fellow voice-over artist Russi Taylor, the voice of Minnie Mouse.

He and his wife met with identical reactions when people discovered that they were the voices of Mickey and Minnie. "Everybody goes: 'Oh, that's so sweet,'" Russi Taylor explained. "When we got married, we kind of kept it quiet because everybody was saying: 'Oh, Mickey and Minnie got married'."

Wayne Allwine is survived by his wife and by five children from a previous marriage.

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