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A Film Major's Annotated Bibliography

Introduction

Having your name in lights, Making it big, and ranking the highest in the box office. Hollywood has become a type of market nowadays instead a display of visual art. So students of film are often misled by this Hollywood standard. In school we are taught to appreciate the artistic value of film rather than its mainstream success. That is primarily what sets apart independent films from Hollywood box office hits. Also independent films stretch the boundaries of the basic movie categories. For example, a gothic fairy tale film with underlying metaphors of global warming, could be an idea of an independent film. This requires in some of its viewers, knowledge of the discourse community, or simply appreciation for the artistic style of a film. Terms that a student or future filmmaker may hear are...“art-house” “avant-garde” “realism and magic realism” and “alternative narrative style”. Those were just a few terms mentioned multiple times within many different articles in this community that are cited below. The issue of the artistic value of a film is an important one discussed in almost every article pertaining to experimental and independent film. Yet, still, if a filmmaker wishes to continue making films at some point the films have to become profitable. To become profitable it has to appeal to a larger audience. That way the film is truly independent, completely a director's artistic vision and yet still gives the director profit. Marketing though many people don't think about it a very important even crucial part of independent film. This in particular is another difference between Hollywood films and Independent films.

Hollywood films as discussed in a few of the articles cited below work more like a machine or profitable business. It takes the statistics of what makes a film profitable and applies them directly to the film to gain the profit. These applications to the film are usually artistically vacant qualities such as the most powerful producers, the most bankable actors, and the most well known venues to shoot at. When the focus is primarily on the profit of the film, the quality of the writing, or cinematography and other artistic application decrease dramatically. In the independent film industry, the locations used to shoot, usually have some type of symbolic, cultural, or aesthetic purpose of being in the film. The actors are chosen primarily because they can portray the character in the most realistic manner. The director is one who is personally, emotionally and or intellectually attached to the film. An Independent film is usually produced by the filmmakers themselves and shown in film festivals for exposure or sold to larger production companies in order to be shown in theaters. That is the primary way in which Independent and Hollywood film markets differ. Students of film in order to join the discourse community have to be well versed in how the industry works and how it came to be that way cited below are articles that have made it easier to enter the discourse community and follow the dialogue pertaining to experimental and independent film.

Speed, L. The Possibilities of Roads Not Taken: Intellect and Utopia in the Films of Richard Linklater. 2007 *Journal Of Popular Film & Television*, 35(3), 98-106.

This scholarly Journal entry written by Lesley Speed, a lecturer of humanities at the University of Ballarat, Australia, explains in detail how the independent and studio films of Richard Linklater changed the relationship between the two industries, and how Linklater creates films that are dense, alternative and intellectual, Unlike the typical Hollywood piece that is purely for consumer gratification.

First Speed analyzes Hollywood film industry; specifically how after the 70's it was a market for "high concept films" examples given were Grease, Jaws, Titanic. "High Concept" Speed provided a definition from Justin Wyatt's journal "*High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood*" "This type of film includes an easily summarized plot, a defined target market, established stars, product tie-ins and merchandising, an instantly recognizable logo, and a visual style redolent of advertising." (Wyatt 1-4, 23-34) Then Speed concludes by contrasting this with the intellectualism Richard Linklater used in his independent films that also appealed to larger audiences thus creating a market and a profitable film. In this way the article showed how independent films could become marketable if the audience is removed from the comfort of stereotypes and entertained by alternative narrative style.

Nowell, R. "The Ambitions of Most Independent Filmmakers": Indie Production, the Majors, and Friday the 13th (1980) 2011. *Journal Of Film & Video*, 63(2), 28-44.

The Journal entry featured in The "Journal of Film and Video" explains the independent origins of 'slasher' films, in detail. It explains how they were highly experimental in the early 70's and not at all profitable. Richard Nowell has taught for the University of Miami; the University of Salford, UK; the University of East Anglia, UK; and the University of Heidelberg, Germany. He is the author of *Blood Money: A History*

of the First Teen Slasher Film Cycle (2011) and has published articles in *Cinema Journal* and *Post Script*.

The article focuses primarily on the unanticipated success of the independent film “Friday the 13th”. The film was revolutionary in these ways; it was independently filmed and distributed, upon its success it displayed the marketability of “slasher” films, and lastly it open doors for future films such as “Blair Witch Project” and “Paranormal Activity”.

Wyatt, J. On the Intersection of Media Studies and Market Research: Exploring the Exchange Between Academia and Business. 2010 *Cinema Journal*, 49(3), 110-115.

A film’s marketability is discussed primarily in this next article written by Justin Wyatt. Wyatt is a researcher who has a degree in economics (BA degree at the University of British Columbia) and Film and Television Studies (MA and PhD degrees at the University of California-Los Angeles [UCLA]). The focus of the article is to consider the opportunities for film and television doctorates in what he calls the “media industries”. Justin Wyatt’s piece “High concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood” is also cited in an article by Lesley Speed.

Marketing in the media industry is described as a technical part of the field- apart from the creative side. Wyatt shows how it is just as important as the creative side and even crucial to film production. The specific role marketing plays in film can range from market sizing to pilot testing and ad testing. Quantitative/qualitative research and client/supplier affiliation, generally, most media market research divides into two functional areas: quantitative research (large-sample testing through online, phone, or

occasionally mail surveys) and qualitative research (small-sample projects including focus groups, in-depth interviews, ethnographies, and usability testing). This is important to filmmakers because it will narrow down your audience and if one knows who their audience is they could create a more effective film towards that specific audience.

Davidson, Rjurick. "In The Scene Thoughts on the Melbourne International Film Festival 2008." *Metro Magazine* n.d.: 46-49. Print.

The film community is highlighted in this particular article written by Rjurick Davidson, a creative writing instructor at RMIT. The piece mainly takes into account the type of people that frequent the independent film festival, in particular, the well-known Melbourne Film festival. Davidson's focus is on the artistic uniqueness of the independent films, and use of different narrative styles to tell a story.

Independent films have the tendency to be more intellectually driven, instead of profitably. Davidson describes this in the article, "If MIFF is more "arthouse" it means that it is also more alternative- that is, it provides a range of movies that are otherwise pushed to the sidelines of mainstream culture." Therefore, as mentioned in the article, at a showcase of successful independent films a lot of different styles and daring subjects that would otherwise attract a very limited audience. As a student pondering a future in the film industry it is important to know the particular audience your piece will appeal to. The reason being because, independent films locate a smaller more selective audience than that of mainstream films.

Traynor, Cian. "Looking For Life: Cian Traynor Interviews Vincent Moon." *Film International* n.d.: 56-59. 2005 Print.

Cian Traynor interviews a successful independent filmmaker “Vincent Moon” who is known for his Avant-garde experimental films. Cian Traynor is a sub-editor and music writer who interviews leading directors, sports stars, politicians, fashion designers, and artists. This article focuses on Moon’s claim that “Hollywood is a lie.” Moon talks about his aspirations to “shake up” or diversify and alter the film industry.

Moon states that Hollywood places a lot of stigmas and rules for what makes a film marketable. He explains that these stigmas destroy the artistic intellectual properties for film. Moon’s focus is to make his films as realistic a display of life as possible, something true to nature, opposed to a product of the machine. “I don’t want to lie with the images by editing reality. I need the final cut to represent how emotive and intense that moment was in real life.” A filmmaker needs to know that once beginning independent films, the odds are already set against your success. This article is important to a young filmmaker or student’s motivation. It helps them understand that the industry is intense however, independent film gives you that chance to find your niche even if it goes against what Hollywood would deem as successful or profitable.

Hoskin, Dave. "Edgy and Experimental and Weird." *Metro Magazine* n.d.: 16-21. 2008 Print.

Written by Dave Hoskins, a freelance writer, in this article a successful filmmaking duo is interviewed about the daring choices in casting and screenwriting of their independent film. Issues of marketability and audience appeal are discussed.

Independent Filmmakers Martin Murphy and Ian Iveson created a film that was not at all “art-house” however not mainstream but very alternative and it was successful at the Melbourne International Film Festival. The characters represented a more realistic portrayal of the American teen, unlike like most art-house style films, or Hollywood blockbusters. “We didn’t want them to look like they’d walked off a catwalk into our movie. We wanted them to look like people that you knew so that you could relate to the film-“The screen writing was a daring innovative alternative narrative style that told the story on different timelines. “And he wrote something that was about fractured time and memory and it was so layered, it brings depth to the project, I think. That’s why it was such an exciting piece to work on as a director, to get my head around this dense story, and its interweaving non-linear plot-“ The most important thing students and new filmmakers can take from this article is that conventionality doesn’t always mean success. Filmmakers and students shouldn’t be discouraged because their film may not be the status quo. Also filmmakers shouldn’t be afraid to show the world a realistic representation of something even if there is a possibility it may hurt the success of the film. Filmmakers should focus more on the execution of the film, and that is what students could take away from this article.

Kolker, Robert. *A Cinema of Loneliness: Penn, Kubrick, Coppola, Scorsese, Altman.*

Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980. Print.

The birth of experimental film is discussed in this article from Robert Kolker's book, "A Cinema of Loneliness". Kolker a Professor at the University of Maryland, talks about the "old" and the "new" Hollywood.

Kolker describes the old Hollywood to be a "guild of craftsmen", individuals who worked together film after film, sharing and influencing each other. The new Hollywood is that of independent producers, "bankable" stars, powerful agents, crafty financiers, "hot" directors, and tax lawyers. The description is not flattering to the industry in the least sense. Most Avant-garde and independent filmmakers see this "new" Hollywood as a destruction of the art form. The film industry is trivialized as just another moneymaking machine. This occurrence ultimately what gave birth to experimental film. Kolker states experimentation with different styles was "-a crucial task in studies like this because classical construction is usually accepted by ordinary audiences as the "natural" -- and even the only — way to tell the story. Instead, the reader has to piece together the idea of the tradition of these films." The seemingly new type of movie intrigued audiences. Students wanting to enter the film industry have to know the dialogue going on in the discourse community. An Article, such as this one, which examines the history of film, is crucial to understanding the conversations of the community so that the student or new filmmaker could join them.

Kapsis, Robert E. *Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992. Print.

In this article of Robert E. Kapsis's novel of the rise to success of Hitchcock, the ideas of self-exposure and branding as well as artistic and aesthetic values of films are discussed. Robert E. Kapsis is Professor of Sociology and Film Studies and teaches courses on research methodology, mass communication and popular culture, and Hitchcock and his legacy.

Basically the conclusion made on the subject of independent film exposure is that external factors rather than intrinsic worth control reputations in the industry. Kapsis, argues that artists can't possibly be identified this way. However, he comes up with another conclusion that it is the way of our American culture. In other words... it's who you know, how you go along with what they say and being at the right place at the right time. The author uses Alfred Hitchcock's "career and legacy as a director of a leader in the suspense film, in order to tell filmmakers that in Kapsis's words "self-promotion, crucial sponsorship by influential members of the film community, and changing aesthetic tastes" will provide a filmmaker with the proper exposure to allow their film gain it's rightful success. Kapsis also challenges the attitude about movies being the "symbolic" reflections of the culture and age in which they are created; movies he describes are ageless and timeless. The author also states he believes that art is a collective action, by which artists create their work, "at least, in part, by anticipating how other people will respond emotionally and cognitively to what they do". The problems of whether there is such a thing as a "film audience" were not the concern of Kapsis. Independent film to him is whether or not it displays your artistic abilities. This article is very important to film students, because as students of film they are learning the art form of filmmaking and not the business of money making.

