

## **The 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”. The issue of the artistic value of a film is important. 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, is a very important and 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. Conversations that arise within this particular discourse community are that of art and vision, or profitability and marketability. A topic that is not discussed

### **The Difference**

The most prevalent conclusion made by most of the participators in this discourse community is that independent film is more of an art than a business. While Hollywood sacrifices power and profit over meaning and substance, independent films thrive off of the aesthetic value of a film. From the location to the director, from the screenplay to the actors - independent film's primarily goal is to tell a story and tell it well and through the vision of the filmmaker. (Speed 2007; Davidson 2008; Traynor 2005; Kapsis 1992; Hoskin 2008)

### **What is Hollywood Business?**

The question often arises, "what exactly is Hollywood business"? Hollywood is a business whose goal of making a profit motivates it, as it does all businesses. To make a

profit in Hollywood extensive knowledge about your targeted audience is needed and yes I mean targeted. Hollywood producers use social research in order to find out trends and specifically what a particular group would want to watch. This leads to over used plots and concepts but that is only because these overly used concepts and plot workings are what will provide profit. Whenever a Hollywood film pushes the boundaries of conventionality its amount of gross in the box office is threatened. Uncertainty is more than often bad for Hollywood producers because it threatens the amount of money that may be made. Even though there have been some unconventional movies that have become Hollywood blockbusters, from a marketing perspective it is not a safe way to operate a business on uncertainty. (Kapsis 1992; Kolker 1980) Independent films most of the time completely ignore the fact of whether or not their idea will be trendy and bring in the profits. Students of film should learn the art of movie making rather than the business of movie making because independent film is what propels a career into Hollywood.

### **Marketing in the Film Industries**

Believe it or not marketing is a crucial part of both independent and Hollywood film. Knowing your audience is a basic part of film making, just as it is when you are writing a novel or essay. Hollywood places a lot of stigmas and rules for what makes a film marketable. Many independent filmmakers agree that these stigmas destroy the artistic and intellectual properties for film. That is why some indie filmmaker's main focus is to make films as realistic a display of life as possible, something true to nature, and not managed by the Hollywood machine. (Traynor 2005; Hoskin 2008) Marketing in film is composed of much more than knowing your audience. The specific role

marketing plays in film can range from market sizing to pilot testing and ad testing. Market sizing is when research is applied to estimate the sizing of your targeted audience. Pilot testing is the release of new movie or show idea without any real intention to continue production unless certain criteria are met, and ad testing is much of the same. (Wyatt 2010) Mentioned before in my topic of Hollywood business social research is used in the production of films. Independent films wouldn't usually rely on this data as much as Hollywood unless their budget was practically large. The two main types of data most valuable to marketing for film are quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research includes large-sample testing through online, phone, or occasionally mail surveys and qualitative research is small-sample projects including focus groups, in-depth interviews, ethnographies, and usability testing. (Speed 2007; Wyatt 2010)

### **The Research Gap**

I've noticed a lot discussion of Hollywood and Independent marketing and of how budgets are different and how production as well as writing and actors differ, however I haven't heard any discussion of the way each film is publicized and if that would make a difference in the success and marketability of the film. Basically, of all the articles I've read, the conclusion made on the subject of independent film exposure is that external factors rather than intrinsic worth control reputations in the industry. (Kapis 1992; Kolker 1980) If I were to research this topic I would use 4 different productions, two Hollywood, two independent. That would make 2 sets of Hollywood/independent movies. One set would be my control, meaning that I would not interfere with the production of either one of those films. The other set of Hollywood/independent movies the only thing I would interfere with is the marketing/publicity factor. The Hollywood film would be given

minimal advertisement besides shown in few select theaters or at film festivals and the independent film would be shown on television commercials and street ads, and shown in most major theatres. From there I would test the popularity of each film. However, my main focus would be whether the independent film is popular with the mainstream audience and if the Hollywood film is popular with the independent audience. I would use the control group to measure the differences between my experimental groups.

### **The Conclusion**

My personal views on this subject are as such, successful movies are movies in which the creator feels that their vision has been made a reality. No matter how many people have seen it, no matter how much money is made, if the filmmaker has achieved his or her goal of making (as a friend of mine in the UCF B.F.A program told me) “Their best favorite movie” the movie is a success.

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