

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Who Will Be the New Miramax?

Adam Leipzig · Tuesday, January 15th, 2013

Who will be the new Miramax? The new patron, creator, distributor, and promulgator of great independent cinema?

Miramax, as you probably know, was the company founded by Harvey and Bob Weinstein in 1979. This new upstart company revolutionized American and global independent film. Until the Weinsteins left Miramax in 2005, a decade after the company had been sold to Disney, the name “Miramax” was synonymous with quality, daring, indie movies.

Twenty years have passed, and no new single, strong voice for independent films has emerged.

Today, there’s a major disconnect happening in the world of movies, one that’s left a gaping hole on our cinema screens. Studios are making fewer movies than they have in decades. Many independent distributors have gone out of business, and while some new companies are emerging, it’s unclear whether any of them has the leadership, vision, and sufficient capitalization to restart the marketplace. Audiences are hungry for alternatives.

So are exhibitors—the people who run cinemas. Which brings me back to my question.



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The movie world is different today than it was in 1979. It’s not certain that, if Harvey and Bob founded Miramax today, they could have the same impact. Their current company, the Weinstein Company, certainly releases great movies, but it lacks the raw energy and game-changing potential of its predecessor.

Cinema has been irrevocably altered by disruptive innovations—in filmmaking, distribution, and financing. The digital revolution has put a movie studio in everyone’s pocket; the mobile phone allows us to shoot a movie in HD, edit it, and distribute it to YouTube. Just because everyone has a camera doesn’t mean everyone’s a filmmaker (they’re not), but the core tools for moviemaking have become miraculously cheap and ubiquitous.

For distribution, as long as you don’t care about getting on a cinema screen, you can distribute yourself via a host of video sites. That doesn’t mean you’ll get money for your movie, or even eyeballs watching it, but at least you can get it out there.

Then, there’s financing. Crowdfunding didn’t exist five years ago. With the advent of Kickstarter and indiegogo, crowdfunding—which gives audience members the opportunity to help finance a movie, without requiring the filmmakers to surrender any equity—has opened another source of money that previously didn’t exist.

All of this puts incredible power into your hands, if you, as a filmmaker, have the drive, spirit, and commitment to quality to use your power well.

But in this revolutionary landscape, you need to be prepared.

Who will be the new Miramax?

The new Miramax won't be one company. The democratization and disruptive innovations of cinema have so irrevocably altered the landscape, that no single company can control the indie movie market or the audience's mindshare. There are too many niche audiences, too many social networks, too many filmmakers.

In fact, the new Miramax won't be a company at all. The new Miramax will be a thousand Miramaxes—filmmakers who follow their vision with fidelity and intelligence. Filmmakers who are smart about using their investors' money, who understand the rules of creating value for their audiences, sales, and distribution companies; filmmakers who know how to play the festival circuit, and ply the social media circuits, to offer their films at any time, in any way, on any device, that their audience wants.

The revolutionary indie movie landscape is full of promise and suspense. Who will be the new Miramax?

If you can navigate this landscape, it could be *you*.

This article is excerpted from Adam Leipzig's new book, 'Inside Track for Independent Filmmakers: Get Your Movie Made, Get Your Movie Seen and Turn the Tables on Hollywood,' available here and at iTunes, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kindle, and Nook.

Image from 'Heavenly Creatures' (1994) directed by Peter Jackson, distributed by Miramax.

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