

And, Where Do I Fit Into All This?

A Modern Aspiring Filmmaker's Inquiries into the Current State of Film and Television

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Now, anyone has the capability of creating a movie and sharing it with the world using a device that is almost required to live a life nowadays. Of course, it was not always this way; becoming a filmmaker was a luxury few could afford. The price of a camera, and film alone was enough to have the majority of people content with continuing to live life through the same lens they've always known: their eyes. Still, there were some who could not turn a blind eye to the allure of the camera and its ability to capture life in motion. Yet, those people we're still not filmmakers. To earn that title, you must have some version of an audience. To do this they would have to refine their craft and end up working for a studio to even have a chance of getting their work distributed, and ultimately shown to audiences.

This radical change in accessibility to filmmaking didn't happen overnight. It took the better part of a century, new technologies to be invented and then reinvented, and the redefining of the entire film industry. Needless to say, the idea of what it means to be a filmmaker wasn't untouched throughout all those changes. The past decade alone shook up the industry to the point where many weren't willing to bet on its survival. A sentence if uttered a decade or two prior would've been laughed at.

Being an aspiring filmmaker myself, I set out to answer the question of how these changes to the industry and the world have affected what it means to be a filmmaker today? Is there a way I can use these changes to my advantage? And what negatives were birthed from these changes and how should they be dealt with. Through my research I have examined these shifts in the film industry and its surrounding landscape throughout its history. Focusing on, business and marketing strategies as well as the technologies used to record and view cinema. For those considering filmmaking as a profession, or any profession within the film landscape, or

for those interested in film from a business or marketing perspective or just film in general. Taking the time to go back and carefully examine the film industry's history can be incredibly useful when considering in the industry of today. The industry of today did evolve from that, much is still the same even if on the surface it does not appear so. Advancements in the technology of film can provide a further understanding of that important to associated with it can help with the understanding of its current state and where the future may lead and how to better navigate it.

I. History of The Film Industry

1. The Studio System

After avoiding devastation during the great war, America's film industry quickly took its place atop the world's totem pole and remained there until the eve of 1940 (Eig). The movie theater is where people spent their free time. They wanted a piece of the glamour the stars exuded, and the theaters gave it to them. Theaters of the day were incredibly luxurious, boasting chandeliers, polished granite stairs with carved lions seated on either side, intricate trims and carpets, and it was all by design (Balio). The industry was solely controlled by eight studios: Paramount, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), Twentieth Century-Fox, Warner Bros., RKO, Universal, Columbia, and United Artists. Their collective domination and immense power over the industry and society as a whole at the time can be accredited to what is now known as the studio system. This period is what many consider to be Hollywood's golden age.

The studio system took time to refine, but once perfected, was the money printing machine every studio executive dreamed of. Each studio "had vast resources that were coordinated in such a way to give the studio authority over every aspect of [the] film, from the

beginning of a story idea to the actual showing in theatres.” (Aberdeen). Every person associated with the creation of each film was under contract, the director, the stars, the writer, set designer, cameraman, everyone. Over time, the studio executives began to pressure their crews to rely on what they know worked, which gave each studio their own look and feel. Audiences could tell if they were watching a Universal or an MGM movie within the first five minutes of the picture. “The product was homogenized. Producers, more than directors or screenwriters, influenced the artistic output. The studio system may have muted individual expression, but as an economic model, the system worked magnificently.” (Eig). Combine this level of control over production with the complete vertical integration of distribution through their own theater circuits as well and that’s how the studio’s achieved a golden age. Unfortunately, for the studios and the studio executives stuffing their pockets, all good things must come to an end.

2. The One-Two Punch (Antitrust & The Television)

The government had always kept a close eye on the studios and made many attempts to limit their power and control during their golden age. Most attempts failed, until they didn’t. In 1938 the suit was filed: *United States v. Paramount Pictures Inc.* Paramount being the main defendant but all eight of the major studios were named in the case. After almost a decade, mostly because of the second world war, The Supreme Court ultimately found all eight to be in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 and ordered the divorcement of the studios and theater circuits in the now landmark case (Conant). Although not unforeseen, the disruption from the decision was felt by everyone working in the industry. Hollywood was entering its most unpredictable period since its inception. Yet, more trouble was waiting in the not-so-distant future.

The big blow to Hollywood would come from the television. The industry paid no mind to television in the early '50's as it was no stranger to competing for its audience's attention during their leisure time. Back in the '20's a different method of consuming content had emerged: the radio, but Hollywood acted fast and debuted movies with synchronized sound which got audiences off their couches and kept them coming. Then, television set ownership increased roughly fiftyfold throughout the decade (Eig). Suddenly, the audiences disappeared, this time comfortable on their couches leaving those lavish theaters to collect dust. However, the studios were determined to win them back. They opened up their wallets and made color film the standard, rolled out widescreen formats and early forms of 3D and marketed it all, aggressively. The gimmicks worked – to an extent, but it wasn't nearly the same. People still chose to stay in the comfort of their own home watching their favorite gizmo: the television. The sharp decline in revenue forced some studios like RKO to reorganize and enter mergers. Others, like Warner Bros. chased the audience instead jumping on the television bandwagon, paying for airtime and creating their own shows, but they were too late to the party to gain any real control (Anderson). Some, on the other hand, decided to face the challenge head on and double down. They started pouring even more money down the money pit the movie business had become, but they were determined to offer audiences an experience that television just couldn't offer - spectacle. Larger than life musicals, period pieces, and well-known adaptations was what the industry stuck to making for the foreseeable future. They did get some people out of the house; turns out pictures that don't rely on complex characters and well-crafted stories were just flat out easier to produce.

“The transformation of the American motion picture industry following World War II has been viewed as a rupture, a crisis so grave that it forced the major studios to abandon or adulterate many of the practices that had virtually defined the Hollywood studio system since

the 1920s. For those who worked within the film industry, the decade of the 1950s has been depicted as the decline and fall of an empire, a time of bewilderment in New York boardrooms and panic on Hollywood backlots” (Anderson).

Hollywood was fighting to stay alive and was willing to throw out the handbook to do it. After the ‘50s one thing was clear, movies and the way they were made would never be the same.

3. New Hollywood

Hollywood would spend about fifteen years in a rut producing largely uninteresting and uninspiring films. Johnathan Eig points out it had gotten so bad that ‘60s film critic, Danny Peary, when putting together his popular collection of ‘Alternate Oscars,’ had to simply leave 1963 as a void, concluding there were no ‘best pictures’ that year. Almost every studio in the industry was pushed to the brink of bankruptcy which led to conglomerate ownership-groups taking over. They had no clue how to run a film studio and sat and watched as their revenues fell further and further. Needless to say, the ownership-groups were willing to try any approach as long as it wasn’t one that remotely resembled the past (Steven). Their prayers would be answered and a “new generation of ‘movie brats’ [would] [wrestle] control of their films from the directionless, financially panicked studios” (Nystrom). These young, determined, hungry directors would forcibly drag Hollywood out from that rut and breathe life back into it, setting the wheels in motion for its eventual return back to its former glory, a period referred to as New Hollywood.

These new directors went against the conventions of traditional Hollywood cinema. They told character driven stories of the working class in urban, everyday environments with not a

shred of spectacle in sight. They explored socially taboo themes such as, sex, drugs, and mental illness. They subverted the expectations that were left seared into the audience's mind of classical cinema using it against them. They were rebels, cowboys taming the wild west of cinema's history. Although, it didn't last very long, this period is beloved by many cinephiles and regarded "in the popular press and academia as 'a remarkable era,' 'a cinematic rebirth,' 'truly a golden age,' 'the last great time' in American cinema... According to Peter Biskind, [Hollywood] experienced a 'new freedom and widespread experimentation' and 'produced a body of risky, high-quality work... that dared to end unhappily'" (Brook). The conglomerate ownership-groups may have not known the extent of how far they pushed their luck gambling on a few fresh out of film school graduates, but it paid off, big time. Ultimately, their work in the late '60s and early '70s paved the way for Hollywood to return to its rightful throne, just not as those same cinephiles would've hoped.

4. The Blockbuster Era

a. Early Days

Hollywood's return to greatness is due to the studio taking back control and fusing the ideologies of this newfound era and those of the past. The conglomerate ownership-groups of the big studios found it was time to reel in some of the slack they had given to directors for the past few years and impose their will to push the industry in whichever direction they believed would maximize profits. "Film is an art; in the hands of Hollywood, however, it is also a commodity, produced, distributed, and exhibited to make a profit" (Balio). Profits have always been and will always be of the utmost importance to the studio, sure there is value placed on the artistry and general content, but the buck stops at the bank. Luckily for the industry, and viewers alike, to

maximize profits the studio sought balance in the creation of films from this point forward. The studios saw potential in the new young cinephile audience of the New Hollywood period and wanted their films to appeal to an even wider group of young people (Steven). To do so, the studios did away with the character driven, mundane stories of New Hollywood, and merged its new age directing style with the jaw dropping spectacles the industry relied on so heavily in the past. However, the studios knew to refrain from going too far and completely taking over productions as they once did during the age of the studio system. Instead, a majority of the production was left up to the director and the cast and crew to explore possibilities, only now the emphasis would be on spectacle rather than reality (Steven). This new direction maintained and affirmed the studios trust in these directors empowering them to push the cinematic envelope and allowing their creativity to flourish into films such as *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977) and thus, the era of the blockbuster was born.

This is possibly the most polarizing moment in all of cinema's history. The release of *Jaws* (1975), the first modern blockbuster, changed the business of filmmaking forever by highlighting spectacle driven films as a lucrative way forward for the industry. Soon after, came the release of *Star Wars* (1977) which solidified the spectacle driven film's place as a box office topper. Its success kicked the blockbuster phenomenon into overdrive, paving right over the cinema of New Hollywood and any last hopes of its survival creating a path for a cinema of moments, of images, of sensory stimuli increasingly divorced from story (Lavik). Many film lovers condemn both Spielberg and Lucas for the betrayal of their peers and cinema itself. Both their films undermined the hard work of every filmmaker who tried to push character driven stories that embodied the aesthetics and ideology of a traditional A-list film into the mainstream during the New Hollywood era (Armstrong). They were both seen as sellouts for choosing to rely

on spectacle to drive their films. Spectacle was viewed like a hypnotist's pocket watch used to infantilize audiences obliterating critical reflection (Lavik).

However, some people, arguably most people, view blockbusters as a blessing to the industry. They have both Spielberg and Lucas to thank for the films that, after a decade of gambles and uncertainty in the industry, cut threw it all and grabbed the attention of the country and beyond. American movies suddenly found themselves plugged into the popular once more (Lavik). Not to mention, the blockbuster era was the longest era in the history of American cinema, safe to say there were worse avenues for the industry to go down other than the blockbuster. Although they may not resemble the blockbusters of contemporary Hollywood, the blockbusters of the '70s laid the groundwork that the Hollywood of today is built upon. One of the most important foundational achievements '70s blockbusters accomplished was to debut and demonstrate the viability of new marketing techniques. Such as, release strategies built around massive prerelease publicity campaigns and widespread saturation booking, both of which are still hallmarks of any blockbuster release to this day (Rubinson). Beyond laying the groundwork for the Hollywood of the future, '70s blockbusters revitalized the entire industry and its connection with the public. "[Films like] *Jaws* brought, the exhilaration of a more participatory cinema, people exiting theatres delivering high-fives to the three hundred or so new best friends you'd just narrowly escaped death with" (Lavik). The blockbusters of the '70s covered such a wide variety of fresh stories each driven by incredible spectacles like never before seen on the silver screen. These '70s blockbusters would go on to shatter any and all expectations of what a movie could be, leaving an entire new generation of moviegoers no choice but to believe in the magic of cinema, a feeling that hadn't been shared by so many in decades.

b. Full Steam Ahead

After miraculously surviving the worst decade in American film industry history, and having spent it trying to get something, anything to stick and having practically nothing to show for it, in addition to having recorded the worst loses ever incurred since their inception. The studios of Hollywood were without a doubt hurting and hurting bad. Then suddenly, something stuck. The blockbuster skyrocketed American cinema back to the top and the studios were along for the ride. The second half of the '70s had every studio executive jumping for joy and this was just the beginning. The blockbusters of the '70s were the biggest, most expensive, most spectacular films the world had ever seen, but now that the studios had tasted sweet success again, their hunger only grew. They were determined to make those blockbusters of the past look like a petty proof of concept when the '80s were over. Yet, there was one issue each studio would inevitably encounter. Funding. Blockbusters aren't cheap, the blockbusters of the '70s already required additional support through "extensive cross-promotion and product tie-ins" (Rubinson) to even make them remotely affordable. So, the solution to more funding was simple: find some form of support with deeper pockets to lean on. Of course, it would be easier said than done. To do so meant taking a risk and shaking up the American film industry on a multinational level. A daunting risk to say the least, but to a studio who's been to hell and back and emerged with its newborn baby blockbuster, it will do everything in its power to ensure its child's future is bright and lucrative. "The studios would pursue horizontal integration, transforming themselves into multinational media conglomerates. The first acquisitions were of Columbia by Coca-Cola in 1982 and of 20th Century Fox by News Corp in 1984–1985, setting off a wave of mergers and acquisitions that would continue through the 1990s" (Rubinson). Surprisingly enough horizontal integration, even at this level, wasn't itself going to support the new, bigger,

badder, blockbusters of the '80s. It was only a mode of access for the studio to expand and tap into many ancillary markets which would be crucial in ensuring there would be enough monetary support to fund not only '80s sized blockbuster budgets but the budgets of blockbusters for decades to come. By the end of the '80s, the studios were earning more through, ancillary markets, such as home video, cable, and network broadcast than from theatrical release (Rubinson).

Going into the '80s, studios just continued to steadily capitalize on their newfound cash cow: the blockbuster. Although, their catalogue sizes had begun to decrease Hollywood studios were the busiest they've been in a long time. Developing and cranking out solid blockbusters was not an easy task. Studio board rooms began to support and push for more sequels to be made, finding them to be an easy, cheap way to keep content fresh (Eim). The studios had done a decent job up until this point keeping their audience happy, but as the culture surrounding these heavyweight-esque blockbuster films grew throughout the decade the pressure to somehow make the spectacle more spectacular was mounting. Anxious as they were for something to take their breath away. Fans of blockbuster culture would have to patiently wait until the very end of the '80s for their wish to come true. But all that waiting would be worth it. In 1989 Time-Warner released *Batman* and announced its plans to roll out a fully-fledged franchise. This announcement coming at the tail end of what was one the most profitable decades in American cinema history, cemented the era of the blockbuster as one that wasn't going anywhere, anytime soon.

c. 21st Century Hollywood

Blockbuster films continued to extend their sheer dominance over the film industry throughout the '90s and the '00s steamrolling through the box office. Each decade boasted a film that earned over a whopping two billion dollars worldwide. This was the first time in history that any movie had ever reached that milestone, one of the movies to do so had even approached three billion ““Top Lifetime Grosses””. Both of the movies were made by the same man. That fact, as insane as it is, speaks volumes to how far the industry, as a whole, has come to be able to have a film earn two billion dollars at the box office in the '90s. It also speaks to how blockbuster films had completely taken over the cinema of the world by the '90s as well. Aside for those revelations cable television took off in the '90s but with those kinds of numbers posted at the box office you can imagine how much the studios were making. Sometime in the '00s shortly after the Hollywood studios realized cable was here to stay a deal was quickly made and “the four U.S. broadcast television networks were each aligned with a Hollywood studio, each of which, in turn, was owned by a multinational corporation” (Rubinson). Although, the studios got stiffed due to the technological advancement of the coaxial cable and the service provided through one having to, more than likely, shell out a hefty chunk of change over that deal. However, the studios did happen to luck out with the invention of the DVD in the late '90s. Of course, it would take some time to catch on and then some more time for everyone else to catch up. This would eventually cause the VHS collections of millions of households across the world to become obsolete. Requiring those people to rebuy their whole collection of favorite films all over again.

5. The Franchise Era

The case of blockbuster films in the '10s is an interesting one, as was the decade as a whole for the film industry. Of course, the blockbuster continues to rule over its dominion: the box office. In fact, every film on the top fifty highest grossing movies of the decade list are all blockbuster films. However, franchise installments (which are without a doubt blockbuster films), are the real big sack bully of the box office and it's not even close: "nine of the ten highest-grossing movies in history are franchises instalments – with eight of these released in the 2010s alone – and of the ten highest-grossing movies of this last decade all are franchises" (Lomax). Many people are calling the Hollywood of today The Franchise Era stating it is what the Blockbuster Era morphed into due to the franchises of today taking over not only nearly the entire industry but also a massive chunk of the film industry's news stories as well. The studio who is by far is most at fault for this massive shift in the industry is Disney. Throughout the decade Disney has spent a hair shy of \$80 million dollars buying up entertainment businesses and even film studios as a whole, collecting the franchises they owned and the rest of their content and when it's all put together with the amount of content Disney itself owns the amount is unimaginable. I'm sure the threat of Netflix and other streaming services dipping their toes in the studio pool, and eventually diving in headfirst didn't slow Disney's shopping spree down. Disney even started a streaming service to compete with them with all the content it had collected. But by taking a step back its clear that the one franchise that stands out this decade in Marvel- Disney's first acquisition of the decade. It has been by far, the most lucrative and influential franchise. Disney saw the potential in Marvel early, and once Marvel became successful it had demonstrated the viability of investing in and producing even more franchises, including Star Wars. Disney was the first to push a movie franchise to the level of Marvel and

still no one comes close, but in doing so Disney grew its “value across multiple businesses and across multiple territories over a long period of time” (Lomax) exponentially. Yet, Disney didn’t stop at Marvel the studio continued to fill its catalog with other franchises too. It was franchises themselves that Disney was after, not just the already globally recognized brands like Star Wars. “Franchising thus enables [Disney] to restore the stabilization of creative form and economic growth that it enjoyed during its golden age” (Lomax). Disney has been collecting the pieces to create its own miniature replica of the studio system (or just about as close as you could get) of Hollywood’s past just for itself. The studio controls the means of distribution through Disney Plus, its streaming service. The production of the media of course being a studio. To top it off it controls every aspect of the content of each of its franchises even going out of their way to rehire the same groups of key crew members depending on the project to best retain the look and feel of each franchise’s world. All of this control with the added bonus of the longevity of the franchises. Even the studios of the golden age of Hollywood had to work for something.

II. Netflix

1. Pre-Studio Netflix – A Brief History

Founded in 1997 Netflix set out to be an Internet-based movie rental business that emphasized the breadth of its 900 title selection and used a program called CineMatch to direct customers towards more niche selections (McDonald). The business quickly grew they ditched the antiquated pay-per unit business model and in two years they were sending DVDs out to their mass of monthly subscribers from one of over 100 distribution centers, as the business grew so did their pride and joy – their selection which now boasted tens of thousands of movie titles in its

catalog (Hosch). From there they would turn towards the tech behind the company to provide and even better online experience to their subscriber base. An updated version of CineMatch was used by their subscribers to build a queue of the films they'd like to rent, and as soon as the previous rental was returned the next film on the queue would be sent to you. People liked this, so much so that within a year of the update Netflix had amassed a quarter million subscribers, and doubled that by 2002, by 2003 one million subscribers. In May of 2002 Netflix became one of the few internet start ups that enjoyed a successful IPO, raising \$82 Million (McDonald). It was only up from here for Netflix. In 2010 Netflix had shifted away from DVD-by-mail operations completely to further focus on the true long-term ambition of Netflix: its new literal-lifechanging video streaming service. The streaming service instantly took off and soon Netflix had over twenty million subscribers making the company one of the largest subscriber bases in the world, a size on par with Comcast. Once accepting of the insane reality that was the size of their subscriber base. They had two objectives: 1. Go international and 2. Negotiate a very different set of distribution rights with the major media and entertainment conglomerates. Unfortunately, for Netflix only one of those objectives would go smoothly. By the end of the year Netflix would be in Canada. The content producers on the other hand, were eager to meet them and embrace the benefits of Netflix' new streaming technology but were extremely weary of Netflix' instrumental position at the center of a rapidly changing and incredibly competitive home entertainment market. Their talks resulted in tension and those tensions resulted in a period of volatility and vacillating strategies for the upstart (McDonald). That was the first business meeting between them and for it to end the way it did left a bad taste in the mouth of Netflix. Even after an apparent triumph the animosity still lingered.

2. The New Age of Netflix, The Studio

Three years later in 2013 Netflix announced it would begin to produce original content exclusively for its streaming service. “‘House of Cards,’ ‘Hemlock Grove,’ ‘Arrested Development,’ and ‘Orange Is the New Black’ would usher in the new era of Netflix’ original series programming. ‘House of Cards’ goes on to win three Primetime Emmy Awards – the first for any internet streaming service” “‘The Story of Netflix’”. Those Three Primetime Emmys, while well deserved, were viewed by the rest the television industry as a welcoming gift to the streamer. Laugh they may, it’s what those Emmys stood for that was so important to Netflix and would be crucial in shaping its business practices of the future, and no, it wasn’t about the recognition, either. “Netflix had fully committed to purchasing twenty-six episodes of House of Cards without requiring the show’s producers to make a pilot. Instead, the creators of the show could, as Spacey described it, get to the real work of developing complex characters and detailed storylines that would keep audiences engaged” (Tryon). Netflix rolled the dice on one of its first pieces of original programming, risking not just the show itself but the streaming services’ reputation as a content producer, before it even had one. Clearly, it paid off and Netflix would never forget it, Netflix now greenlights its series whole hog, or nothing at all, skipping the pilot process entirely and giving “wide creative license to its creators--the better to lure writers away from the competition. And the fruits have been good: Arguably one of streaming's biggest hits, Stranger Things, came from letting two relatively unknown writer/filmmakers have carte blanche to pen the retro '80s-nostalgic series of their dreams. It just so happens that those retro '80s-nostalgic dreams were shared by most of the country” (Lopez). Netflix still retains that policy today. Placing the greenlight policy aside for now. Netflix’ trust in creators is extremely admirable, I’m sure the streaming service gets burned every once in a while, between the

greenlight policy and the sheer trust it places in its creators. But the bonds created on every other occasion vastly outweigh the burns. Additionally, Lopez is absolutely right, any writers or creators who have heard these stories either believe them to be myth or wish to work for Netflix more than any other content out there. Netflix would spend the next four years expanding their service to 190 countries and having added 21 languages around the world. Their subscriber base would grow to over 100 million globally and would surpass the 1,000 hours of original content milestone. Not to mention the, now, global streaming juggernaut would take home its first Academy Award for ‘The White Helmets’ “‘The Story of Netflix’”. The biggest fear of all the other media giants had now come true in 2017. Netflix had become the massive content powerhouse it way always going to be, it was inevitable. Now through no fault of Netflix’ own, other than providing a kickass service at an affordable price, people by the millions have already cut their cable to join Netflix’ subscriber base, but still some cord cutter hold outs remained (Eun-A). One thing was for sure, after comparing the graph of American cable subscribers to that of American Netflix subscribers. It was clear who cited who for millions of terminations. Two more years would pass, and Netflix had once again been to a handful of award ceremonies, but this time there was no telling if they robbed the place or not! Netflix took home twenty-three Emmys in 2018. 23. That’s twenty more than 2013, and they didn’t stop there. In 2019, Netflix would go home with four Academy Awards, for Alfonso Cuarón’s ‘Roma’ (Bucciferro) and ‘Period. End of Sentence’. 2020 was a different year for Netflix, yet they were the most nominated studio at the Academy Awards and Emmys. The future has never looked brighter for Netflix, will 2021 be the year of 200 million subscribers? We will find out. One thing is for sure a lock though, the internet streaming service giant will most definitely be hauling home some more trophies to add to the collection.

III. Analysis Through a Modern Aspiring Filmmaker's Lens

1. A Disrupted Industry

Before the novel corona virus sent a shudder throughout the industry, the last real threat to it was of Netflix. The same studios that are responsible for redefining the feature films into the blockbusters that, most, of the world knows and loves today almost half a century before, looked old and decrepit next to Netflix' sleek modern app. The tech-studio from the future's ever-snowballing influence loomed over the film industry and for a period of time, during which it felt like there was nothing you, or the rest of Hollywood could do besides to watch and wait for Netflix to completely take over forcing the major studios and theaters to close their doors forever. The end of Hollywood as we knew it was upon us.

This terrified me. I had always dreamed of growing up, making the pilgrimage to L.A. like so many before me, working my way up the ladder at one of the studios, and then, one day get to see my name in lights on a marquee after making my own masterpiece, leaving my mark on such a rich history. I couldn't get enough. When I was a kid, I never wanted movies to end. After watching one of the 80's blockbusters my Dad grew up on and passed on to me, I would always pick up my toy camera and play director to "hurry up and make the sequel" the studios of the past would've loved the little eight-year-old director I was. The threat of my dream being washed away before I would even have a chance at realizing it was a terrible feeling of uncertainty.

Luckily for my dream and for everyone who's bills currently depended on jobs in Hollywood, Netflix didn't do any of that. Instead, their emergence into the content producing world and L.A. itself did quite the opposite for Hollywood and its workers than what everyone

had feared: it started a gold rush. “Thanks to [Netflix], the machine is humming in a way not seen since the end of the studio system in the '50s: Production is returning to L.A., armies of would-be scribes hunch over MacBooks at third-wave coffee shops all over town, and even mid-level TV stars have their pick of offers from all the green-lit shows” (Lopez). This was by no means Netflix rolling over to and joining Hollywood because it couldn’t beat them. This was Netflix barging into the studios house of worship, taking what’s been theirs for decades and making it Netflix’ own. Netflix stood for everything the studios weren’t, it was the all-encompassing new home for every niche the film industry had been slowly suffocating while becoming more and more reliant of repetition and franchises. Netflix was a breath of fresh air to say the least.

2. A Dream Reimagined in Reality

For the creators and storytellers of film and television, the doors of possibility had been blown open. On average, people had been viewing content on screens at least three hours a day before the upheaval of the video contents distribution (Shiue). The televisions of living rooms and the silver screens of theaters had been combined and put into the pockets of virtually every person walking the Earth. Now the hours that someone consumed content was no longer limited to them having to seeking out and spending time in front of a fixed screen, and as expected the hours of consumption began to grow.

“As a result, the industry has shifted back to an emphasis on scribal output. During Hollywood's golden age... The logic was that by chaining playwrights, novelists, whoever to typewriters like 10,000 monkeys, eventually you'd get the next *Gone With the Wind*. Not

coincidentally, membership in the Writers Guild has exploded over the past few years, increasing by 1,000 in just two or three years. Showrunners are beginning to see a shift back to "overall deals," a form of "golden handcuffs" in which producers buy exclusive rights to a writer's output for a specified amount of time for a huge chunk of money--an echo of the old studio's habit of putting writers under contract. Despite their totalitarian ways, the old studio bosses understood the value of writers. Irving Thalberg famously quipped, 'If it isn't for the writing, we've got nothing. Writers are the most important people in Hollywood--and we must never let them know it.' The difference between then and now, however, is that the writers most certainly know it" (Lopez).

Netflix had reincarnated the golden age of Hollywood into itself, controlling the production and distribution lines of fresh, well-written content just as Hollywood had during the era of the studio system. Leaving modern Hollywood cowering and clinging to its franchises surrounded by a talent pool that had been sucked clean. It was only a matter of time that I would have to come to terms with the reality that the studios of Hollywood are no longer what they were forty years prior, and my dreams of making movies there were no longer something worth striving for. They would have to be reimagined in the frame of this altered landscape and that opportunity to reimagine where I want my place to be in the industry which had been set in stone in my mind for so long, was exciting to me. The last thing I want is to limit myself to making CGI chop suey while having to adhere to the rules of a cinematic universe just because of the name of a studio. I found, at my core, what I truly wanted is a career in which I would be to tell my own stories through film and Netflix surely seems to check those boxes. Frankly, it just seems more fun to be working on stories at a studio that values strong characters and quality cinema while encouraging creative freedom and the going out on limbs. In addition, the immense pressure of creating the

next big thing that so many artists, of every industry are crushed by has been eliminated by Netflix' genius business model. When and if your work doesn't take off it's not considered a failure unlike the studios of Hollywood. People are bound to see it because of the sheer amount of people subscribed to Netflix not everything has to be a blockbuster, money is made with every view. My newfound freedom to jump between working for film or television has also been very freeing. While they are different, they share "important similarities and overlaps in their production and labour processes. In both cases the production process is frequently project based with a set of common stages: pre-production (conception, design and planning), production, post-production (editing, adding music tracks and special effects) followed by broadcast (television) or exhibition (film)" (Wing-Fai). Bringing a story to life and creating an image for a television camera and a film camera is not different. Both forms of content need light, sound, etc. So, the people that can do that for a film project can turn around and do that for a project set for television.

3. The Stone Ladder

Liberated from my dream built in world that no longer existed, it seemed like opportunity existed around every corner. Yet, there was much that was still left unchanged by both my change in thinking and by the entire disruption on the industry itself. That left unchanged was the path to having a voice as a creator in the industry. Everyone had to start from the bottom and climb the ladder. Sure, some have climbed quicker than others but anyone that has had a voice from the 1910s to now, from Charlie Chapin to the Coen brothers, climbed one rung to the next and so would I.

Most likely, I will start out as a production assistant, as most do, because of two main reasons. One, it is the most widely available, if not widest available, jobs in both the worlds of film and television. Two, it requires practically zero experience of any kind. A common job description for a production assistant is to execute tasks “like answering the office phones, delivering post, making tea and coffee, preparing meeting rooms, collecting equipment, buying lunch for other team members, photocopying documents, collecting VISAs and getting props or costume items. Sometimes runners can be expected to help put footage onto the edit machines and maintain equipment” (Ashton). These are all very simple, and mundane tasks to accomplish, but all things can be handled with special care and importance. Doing this, well, without question catch someone attention, but it is important to be consistent even when you are not noticed every task, every time, must be carried out with that same care and importance otherwise your work ethic is dependable. Dependability and consistency are traits when noticed are met with more than just a simple “thank you”. Those are the traits that get you to the next rung of the ladder.

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