



Indie, Inc.: Miramax and the Transformation of Hollywood in the 1990s (Texas Film and Media Studies)

By Alisa Perren

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During the 1990s, films such as *sex, lies, and videotape*, *The Crying Game*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Good Will Hunting*, and *Shakespeare in Love* earned substantial sums at the box office along with extensive critical acclaim. A disproportionate number of these hits came from one company: Miramax. *Indie, Inc.* surveys Miramax's evolution from independent producer-distributor to studio subsidiary, chronicling how one company transformed not just the independent film world but the film and media industries more broadly. As Alisa Perren illustrates, Miramax's activities had an impact on everything from film festival practices to marketing strategies, talent development to awards campaigning.

Case studies of key films, including *The Piano*, *Kids*, *Scream*, *The English Patient*, and *Life Is Beautiful*, reveal how Miramax went beyond influencing Hollywood business practices and motion picture aesthetics to shaping popular and critical discourses about cinema during the 1990s. *Indie, Inc.* does what other books about contemporary low-budget cinema have not—it transcends discussions of “American indies” to look at the range of Miramax-released genre films, foreign-language films, and English-language imports released over the course of the decade. The book illustrates that what both the press and scholars have typically represented as the “rise of the American independent” was in fact part of a larger reconfiguration of the media industries toward niche-oriented products.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Perren's account is a corrective to the juicier journalistic record, particularly the gossipy standard narrative, Peter Biskind's *Down and Dirty Pictures* (Simon and Schuster, 2004). Biskind's popularity is probably safe: Perren's style is that of someone turning on the lights at a party, and her informative, eye-opening argument is intentionally deflating and unromantic...She busts myths, and persuasively so..." (*Film Quarterly* 2012-10-01)

"In her book *Indie, Inc.*, Alisa Perren masterfully explores the myths and realities behind the Weinsteins' rise, their cunning self-mythologizing of their enterprise, and the subsequent decline of the company's cultural influence and commercial viability." (*Journal of Popular Culture*)

About the Author

Alisa Perren is Associate Professor in the Department of Radio-TV-Film at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the coeditor of *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method* and Coordinating Editor of *In Media Res*, a MediaCommons project that experiments with new forms of online scholarship. Her work has appeared in a range of publications, including *Film Quarterly*, *Journal of Film and Video*, *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, and *FlowTV*.

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