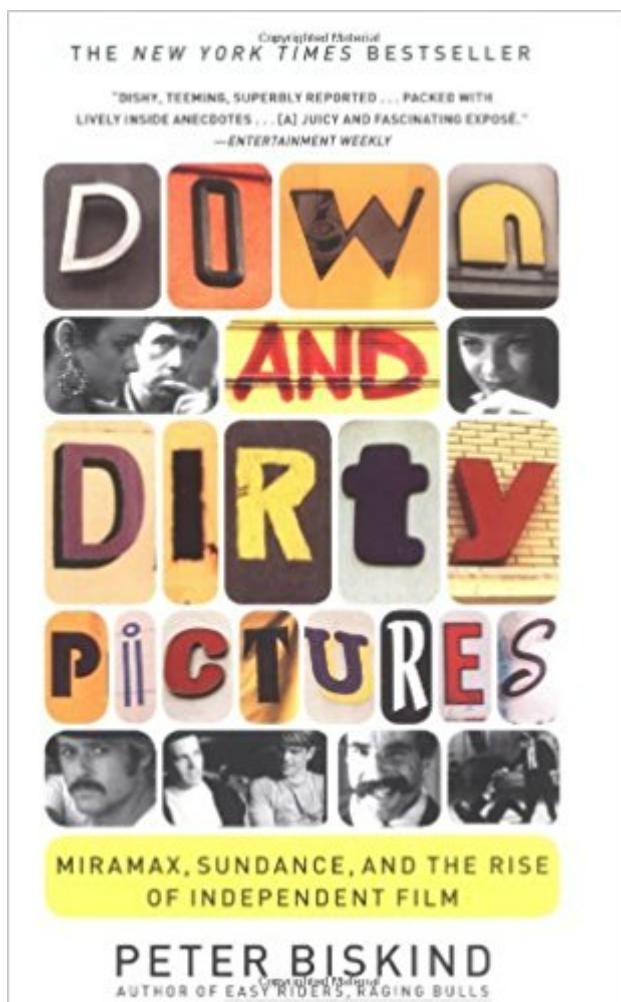


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Down And Dirty Pictures: Miramax, Sundance, And The Rise Of Independent Film



Synopsis

Down and Dirty Pictures chronicles the rise of independent filmmakers and of the twin engines -- the Sundance Film Festival and Miramax Films -- that have powered them. As he did in his acclaimed Easy Riders, Raging Bulls, Peter Biskind profiles the people who took the independent movement from obscurity to the Oscars, most notably Sundance founder Robert Redford and Harvey Weinstein, who with his brother, Bob, made Miramax an indie powerhouse. Today Sundance is the most important film festival this side of Cannes, and Miramax has become an industry giant. Likewise, the directors who emerged from the independent movement, such as Quentin Tarantino, Steven Soderbergh, and David O. Russell, are now among the best-known directors in Hollywood. Not to mention the actors who emerged with them, like Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, Ethan Hawke, and Uma Thurman. Candid, penetrating, and controversial, Down and Dirty Pictures is a must-read for anyone interested in the film world and where it's headed.

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Customer Reviews

You've heard the rumors. The film industry is filled with ruthless executives who think nothing of brow-beating their employees, of using creative accounting to cheat filmmakers, and re-cutting a director's vision into a soulless crowd-pleaser. Well, it turns out those rumors are often true--at least according to Peter Biskind's highly entertaining Down and Dirty Pictures: Miramax, Sundance, and the Rise of Independent Film. Packed with industry anecdotes and history, the book chronicles the growth and eventual mainstreaming of independent films and offers the back-story to seminal works including sex, lies, and videotape and Pulp Fiction among others. Biskind, author of Easy Riders,

Raging Bulls: How the Sex-Drugs-and-Rock 'N' Roll Generation Saved Hollywood, divides most of his time between Sundance Film Festival founder Robert Redford and Miramax co-chairman Harvey Weinstein. Biskind simultaneously credits these two as fostering, though ultimately ruining, the purity of independent film. Other indies are largely left out, although the now-defunct October Films appears prominently in the role of noble failure. Biskind has serious points to make, but he's not stingy with the war stories, either. (One particularly amusing scene involves October executives chasing Robert Duvall's agent through a Sheraton Hotel in an attempt to stop him from making a deal with Miramax to distribute *The Apostle*.) Those who have only a passing interest in the movie business may tire of Biskind's oft-repeated themes (Weinstein is an evil genius! Redford is a passive-aggressive control freak!) but for those who truly love film industry gossip, *Down and Dirty Pictures* is a feast of insider stories--each tidbit juicier than the last. --Leah Weathersby --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

According to Biskind (*Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*), most people associate independent filmmaking with such noble concepts as integrity, vision and self-sacrifice. This gritty, ferocious, compulsively readable book proves that these characterizations are only partly true, and that indie conditions are "darker, dirtier, and a lot smaller" than major studios' gilded environments. The intimidating image of Miramax's Harvey Weinstein plows powerfully through Biskind's saga; the studio honcho emerges as a combination of blinding charm and raging excess, a boisterous bully who tears phones out of walls and overturns tables. Former Miramax exec Patrick McDarrah, in comparing Weinstein with his brother and partner, Bob Weinstein, concludes, "Harvey is ego, Bob is greed." These two volatile personalities directly-and fascinatingly-contrast with the book's other protagonist, Sundance creator Robert Redford. Biskind presents Redford as passive aggressive, an invariably polite conflict avoider, but also notorious for keeping people waiting and failing to follow through on commitments. Because of the actor/director's elusive persona and his artistic tastes0which Biskind describes alternately as puritanical, conservative and mushy-the Weinstens dominate throughout. Biskind brilliantly covers their career hits, from the high-profile acquisition of Steven Soderbergh's *Sex, Lies and Videotape* through backstories for *Cinema Paradiso*, *Good Will Hunting* and *Chicago* to brutal clashes with Martin Scorsese over *Gangs of New York*. And Quentin Tarantino's lust for stardom, Billy Bob Thornton's "ornery, stick-to-your-guns" personality and Ben Affleck's frustration about being underpaid are just a few of the other mesmerizing elements Biskind includes. Above all, Biskind conveys a key truth: the Weinstens and Redford, whatever their personal imperfections, possess courage and a deep, overwhelming love of film. Copyright Â© Reed Business

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This book is a Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde. It is a very good example of investigative journalism and also an example of poor editing. Please don't include everything you learned. Maybe he needed Harvey Weinstein to edit the book! What is good is a very detailed (perhaps too much so) look at the evolution of independent films from "Sex, Lies, & Videotapes" to the current state of independent films approaching the Hollywood route. There is no question he did exhaustive research and while he has been criticized for doing a hatchet job on Miramax and Redford, there are too many stories with the same theme for the portrait painted to not be substantially correct IMO. If you are a fan of film, whether you are a casual weekend fan of Hollywood fare or a student of serious film, there is something here for you. But generally this will be of interest if you enjoy following the business side of films and how the personalities affect this. However, the book also does a great job overlaying the careers of Steve Soderberg, Quentin Tarantino and Damon/Affleck in enough detail for the fans of "stars". The Damon/Affleck section is particularly interesting as it showed two kids viewed as actors making a conscious effort to tap into the indie craze to get their break in the business. In many respects it's like the old Stallone/Rocky story of having the screenplay and forcing Hollywood to use the author as the star. Now for the negative. His earlier book "Easy Rider/Raging Bull" covered the 70s film explosion in great depth. It appears he was trying to recreate the magic in this book. While the evolution of independent films is a worthwhile subject, what he ended up with is a book about Miramax with brief interludes about other stories that can almost be distractive. Just look at the title where he tries to throw too much explanation. To me, this is an unauthorized biography of Miramax. That's OK. There's plenty to cover there and he did it quite well. But to continue the charade by occasionally throwing in visits to the mess @ Sundance just distracts the reader. Maybe he thought it would help sell books by throwing some dirt on Redford. This book is a real commitment. It is long, detailed reading that takes time. But the payoff is worth it. It is easy to see while you are reading that there will be many upset executives and I doubt he will have as much access if he makes another attempt at a Hollywood subject. Overall, I recommend this book for serious readers of Hollywood or the business of Hollywood.

Having trained at Focus, and now producing on my own, I think this book is by far great at showcasing great case studies and also detailed accounts or history lessons on the world of indie filmmaking. I think every producer should read this book but more importantly every filmmaker

Shows amazing behind the scenes stories of how movies get made, and distributed, who wields the power and how. The personalities behind the movie making business, and the amazing story of Harvey Weinstein and his brother and how they created one of the most powerful studios. Its all I hoped it would be and more. Hard to put the book down.

I've always enjoyed Peter Biskind's writing - he takes you up close and personal into the film industry. It's similar to looking through a window - but you don't feel like a peeping tom. I think one needs to read Easy Riders, Raging Bulls first as Down and Dirty Pictures continues to take you through the hallways of the Industry. Peter takes no prisoners - tells it like it is and if you don't like that -then find something else to read.

well done, but not as good as Biskind's "Easy Riders....." In film terms, a sequel that doesn't quite live up to the original, but still worth seeing. Excellent journalism, vivid portraits.....more proof that Hollywood (and its satellite planets in New York) is not the place to be if one is looking for sanity.

Fast shipping. Nice deal.

Great book. Arrived quickly.

The book is a joy ride in the "Miramax year's" of film making. But unfortunately it was closed before the Weinstein leaves Miramax. So, it made the look a little incomplete. But It's a great reading.

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