



How I Made A Hundred Movies In Hollywood And Never Lost A Dime

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In these pages **Roger Corman**, the most successful independent filmmaker in Hollywood relates his experiences as the director and/or producer of such low-budget classics *Attack of the Crab Monsters*, *The Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Raven*, *The Man with the X-ray Eyes*, *The Wild Angels*, *The Trip*, *Night Call Nurses*, *Bloody Mama*, *Piranha*, and many others. He also discusses his distribution of the Bergman, Fellini, and Truffaut movies that later won Academy Awards in the Best Foreign Film category. Corman alumni—John Sayles, Martin Scorsese, Jack Nicholson, Vincent Price, Francis Ford Coppola, Peter Bogdanovich, Peter Fonda, Joe Dante, and Jonathan Demme, among others—contribute their recollections to give added perspective to Corman's often hilarious, always informative autobiography.

How I Made A Hundred Movies In Hollywood And Never Lost A Dime Details

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From Reader Review How I Made A Hundred Movies In Hollywood And Never Lost A Dime for online ebook

Daniel says

I read this book a very long time ago, but came across my old copy in a bin of stored books, and gave it another once-over. it still stands up as a delightful look at the Hollywood industry!

Roger Corman has been a bit of a rogue, a maverick, in Hollywood, producing movies inexpensively (some might say cheaply) and yet always moderately successfully.

Corman is not out to produce the next blockbuster. He is out to do what the industry was initially geared for - to provide entertainment. It is often too bad that we expect all the latest technology and bells and whistles and explosions in our films today. A good thrill and a strong script and decent performances should be all that's required. Corman understands that and works with it.

We should not forget that many of today's (and yesterday's stars started by working with the likes of Corman). He recognizes talent and gives people the chance to do what they can, even if they haven't established a name for themselves.

As I sit here and write this review, I can still think back on a number of Corman movies that gave me a thrill or scared the heck out of me, even though they wouldn't stand up to the blockbusters of today (nor did they compare to the blockbusters of their own day).

For anyone interested in film-making, Hollywood anecdotes, or just good, solid non-fiction, this is worth reading.

Andy says

If you like trashy movies you have to read this great book written by a man who nobly dropped acid to make sure he replicated the experience correctly for his sleaze classic "The Trip". Lots of dirt on the great Edgar Allan Poe movies he made with Vincent Price and some cool stories about the late, great Beverly Garland, too. Highly recommended.

Sara says

Roger Corman is a fascinating personality. He directed and produced controversial movies and bent the rules for the sake of making money, but also for the sake of making a statement about the world as he viewed it.

The one trait I admired most about him was his willingness to let young people prove themselves and to learn under his guidance. It is important to remember that many of those celebrities we take for granted as being rich and famous are only that way because they were given a chance at one point in their life.

Michael says

I bought this book waaay back when I was actually working in independent film, but only got around to reading it now. I'm glad it exists. In the independent film world there is a myth that independent filmmaking was introduced in the 1970s and that before that there was nothing. Roger Corman sets the record straight by talking about his own independent filmmaking experience in the 1950s and 60s, and by enumerating every famous independent filmmaker he trained (Demme, Coppola, Scorsese, Dante, Bogdonovich...even Cassavettes comes up). He's not a particularly good writer, even with the collaboration of Jim Jerome, but his stories are so darn interesting that it doesn't really matter. The only times I felt the book got bogged down was when he felt the need to go into detail on the financials of distribution - and some people might find that useful or interesting.

The title of the book is, of course, a brag. Corman admits that some of his pictures didn't do as well as he was hoping, but the point is that he certainly never went bankrupt, was hardly ever sued, and found ways of staying afloat even during some of the bigger "crisis" moments for the major studios. I once heard or read someone claim that Roger Corman says he "never made a bad film." If so, it wasn't in this book. He admits that the end-product of his work is mixed, but, like millions of cult movie fans all over the world, he retains a certain affection for all of them, even targets for MST3K like "It Conquered the World." I would agree with him. The way I'd put it isn't so much a question of good/bad (which is always problematic), but more of whether there is something there which can be enjoyed. Some low-bux filmmakers (Jerry Warren comes to mind, as does Adrian Weiss) just don't seem to have cared whether the product was any good; they had a distribution deal and a poster, and they got something, anything, done under budget to fit the need. Corman took the time to try to put whatever production value he could manage on the screen, in spite of shoestring budgets, and the sense comes through, both in the book and on the screen, that he cared whether what he had in the end was worth an audience's time. He did this without wasting his backers' money, and in the process managed to learn a great deal about filmmaking, and himself. That personal quest is what makes this book worthwhile.

Clint Hoagland says

Interesting perspective into Roger Corman's career and how it intersects with the film industry at large; to hear him tell it he's pretty much responsible for all the careers of all the interesting directors and actors of the 70s, they all got their start on Corman pictures.

I admired his economical writing style (probably due in some part to his cowriter) and the backstory for all the Corman movies (of which I am a fan) was fun and interesting. The later chapters are a little draggy after he left directing (which he clearly regrets). Overall a nice companion volume to his pictures.

Garrett Cash says

Roger Corman's name may not always be placed in the pantheon of directors like John Ford, Orson Welles, or Howard Hawks when discussing the greatest and most influential American directors, but I believe that he is still arguably one of the most influential and fascinating. First of all, there's his status as one of the earliest

and most successful independent filmmakers in Hollywood. There's the fact that his work ranges from 50's atomic sci-fi drive in cinema, to risky statement films, gothic masterpieces, counterculture staples, and ultimately 70's indie legends. His brilliant system of low-cost filmmaking is one employed by many of the greatest filmmakers in all of cinema. His generosity in giving a space for untested talent to work led to some of the greatest talents art has ever known to flourish. On top of all this, he made many imaginative films that continue to be seen and influence young filmmakers. The guy really has a lot going for him. Even though he may have never made that one masterpiece statement that cemented his legacy as an artist, his life and work were fruitful in a way that is particularly unusual for a man working in the exploitation cinema business. Even if you're not a fan of his films, his life is admirable and inspirational. I personally love watching Corman's films and find them just as informative to my development as an artist as watching any of the celebrated art directors. This being the case, I knew I had to read Corman's account of his incredible career in Hollywood. Just as I had found in his films and the movies made by his pupils, the book encouraged and inspired me to get out there and make movies. All it took was imagination, drive, and a eye for what might sell that gave Corman what he needed to succeed. This account of his life, that generally spans from his days directing 50 minute drive-in flicks to producing and distributing movies from the most successful indie company in Hollywood, is a must read for any fan of underground movies and for those who see themselves making films. It will teach you more than you realize at the time you read it.

Christopher Barnes says

Great for aspiring directors that want to save cash and working with limited resources.

Rick Mccray says

What does it look like to actually live your dream? What does it feel like to have your dream job that you created for yourself? This is the story of Roger Corman, who was a director for straight to drive-in movies during the 1960's & 1970's and later went on to own a powerful movie distribution company during the 1980's. I loved this book for several reasons. It is a business book with a sneaky counter-culture undertone. He explains that he went to Stanford and planned to become an engineer like his father, but he felt a calling to do something more creative. He broke into movies working behind the scenes and eventually started directing very low budget, quick turn around movies that went to drive in theaters. He learned that doing his movies with a rapid fire production schedule and shoe string budget resulted in massive profits to him personally and, because his movies were usually quirky dark comedies, a fairly sizeable following from audiences.

Roger Corman was influential in beginning the careers of several luminaries in acting and directing; Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, Jack Nicholson, Sylvester Stallone and several others. He was always taking chances on new actors and directors to the point that people wanted to work with him, because his "break neck" schedules gave them an inside look into the business that would have taken years to achieve otherwise. I would recommend this book, because it is self told story of a man who was spinning gold and never fully felt satisfied about his product. Maybe that is the formula for successful people? Good read.

Chris says

This book could be none other than inspiring and learned experience for anyone wanting to go into film making as a career. Roger Corman has been named the greatest independent filmmaker in the world. He has made and produced well over 500 hundred films and is responsible for the majority of the world's best film director's today.

The story of how he made a hundred movies is about a man who wanted to try out film making and see what it was like. He was a engineering graduate student from Stanford whose father was also an engineer. Roger thought that film maker was something that could have a greater impact on people because you got to tell a story that everyone could see.

His technical background and attention to detail allowed him to work diligently as a director because it required precise timing and execution, plus lots of money. Roger worked very efficiently as a director and learned how to cut cost on his films and make them cheaper than the major studios were doing. This gained attention for him because no where else was someone making movies like he was.

What also made him such a major force in the industry was the fact that he could take any movie idea and turn it into something that people would enjoy watching. Later on as he started making money from his movies, he had more power to have other people direct his films. Anytime someone came to him with a movie idea, he encouraged them to work on it some more and if it sounded right, gave them the money to direct it. Behind every idea, he always thought of the cost and time it went into making a film from day one to the end. This was how he was able to stay so profitable in an industry that didn't always get to see profits.

Eventually he went on to start his own distribution company and is responsible for many of the classics that we have come to love from the 70s and 80s. After a successful run at that he got out and for a short time, got back in and then eventually made another film and slowed down.

He still produces but doesn't direct anymore and he still helps those get into the film making business. If you are one who wants to learn about his impact and the movies you need to watch, and also how the film making business works, then this is a book to read and study. It has all the great advice you need for making it in this business.

James Hold says

Book is good and informative to an extent. It written in a clear style with strong simple sentences, economical as per his style. Corman is known for making quick, inexpensive movies that entertain. As a writer I was hoping he'd go into more detail on exactly how he accomplished this. You get a little of his philosophy but not enough. I lost interest in the final chapters as he handed off projects to others and did less directing himself. I rate it a good book if you're interested in an uncomplicated semi-biography but I didn't glean any helpful techniques from it.

Mike Glaser says

A great book if you love the movies. Roger Corman has made movies with just about everyone in Hollywood and he is an amazing story teller.

Jim Berkin says

Corman's autobio is pretty honest and thoroughly entertaining. He goes into a lot of detail about the nature of maverick indy filmmaking back when the technology did not exist that enables much of it today. Corman writes more like a businessman than a filmmaker, although he sometimes discusses the aesthetic quality of the films he produced & directed - but more often than not, it's about what it took to get the stuff made, marketed & distributed. In other words, it's a great window into the workings of a movie producer's mindset.

Jack Herbert Christal Gattanella says

(Scorsese on Corman): "I had expected in Roger a Harry Cohn type, a rough, very crude person who was a genius at knowing what people wanted and how to market it. Instead I found him a very courteous and gentlemanly guy, but a very stern and tough customer who was quite polite as he explained these outrageous tactics of exploitation in cold, calm terms. It was very funny. Roger is despite himself, the most remarkable type of artist because, while not taking himself too seriously, he was able to inspire and nurture other talent in a way that was never envious or difficult - but always generous."

(Demme on Corman): "Roger's contribution to cinema is awesome. He's a wildly gifted, masterful director in complete command of the medium; superb casting, superb camera work and editing, amazing storytelling, and brilliant graphic use of the frame. He's a giant."

(Jack Nicholson on Corman): "They don't make movies like THE TERROR anymore."

This book was as fun as getting loaded with the Hell's Angels while tripping on LSD and going fast and furious with the creature from the haunted last woman on Earth and reading Edgar Allen Poe in a WW1 Red Baron plane! Okay, that's a lot to cram in there - I'm sure I could've worked in while listening to the RAMONES on full blast...

(by the way, an idea of some of the fun anecdotes here - according to Allan Arkush, Corman originally commissioned what became Rock n Roll High School as a *Disco* high school movie, and still thought it was as he had a differently titled script and wasn't there during filming when the title and the band changed, when asked "Why is it not disco anymore," Arkush and company replied, "You can't blow up a high school at the end and it's disco!" I'm paraphrasing but you get the idea)

If you like reading about careers in the cinema this is an excellent ride for the simple fact that, between the man, many films Corman has directed and produced (and while he directed something like 45, almost 50, movies from 1955 to 1971, he also produced something like over *400* in the years since), he's bound to have adventures in filmmaking, and that's what you get here and then some. Corman's saga first-hand is a little like reading Lumet's 'Making Movies', only it's the "B" Side (and I know, I know, he doesn't like being called "Kind of the B's", whatever, it sounds like he's leading a SWARM which is an awesome, cinematic

visual as far as leading the charge of independent-minded filmmaking against the usual-numbed masses and stinging some bastards). I think if a young person (younger than me I mean, though me too I guess as a guy in his 30's) looking to get into filmmaking wants to know what goes into it, this gives a good idea about the simple fact of, generally, two things: 1) you learn on the job, especially when resources are tight and you got to use what you got, and 2) filmmaking is hard but at least it's better than dealing with the money side of things.

Not unlike Corman's movies at his best, his memoir is not something that is any kind of chore to ingest: it's fast, exciting, and unusual in places. If nothing else, as the long quote from Jack Nicholson about working on **THE TERROR** suggests, this is worth reading if nothing else to learn about what went into the making of **THE TERROR**, just *one of* the movies Corman shot in two days... or, one should note, almost did this time when he had Karloff for two days and then spent *nine months* getting second unit work from a rotating series of filmmakers who would make names for themselves soon to come: Coppola, Monte Hellman, Jack Hill, even Nicholson himself got his shot at directing.

What one comes away with is that Corman is... one of the most professional guys who has been in the business, despite (or maybe because in some small way) his low-budgets: he never made a movie that got into the Criterion collection (or,... no, wait, not totally true, movies he picked up like **CRIES AND WHISPERS** and **FANTASTIC PLANET** are in there now, I mean ones he directed though), but who cares? He got good at what he did, and it got to where he could shoot very quickly, while at the same time giving pros like Shelley Winters and Robert De Niro on a movie like **BLOODY MAMA** the time to get their good preparation shown on film. And at the same time his outsider status was a badge of pride and something that made him a hero... and something that he could never totally shake (in part because, well, what the hell are these big studios doing spending SO much money on over-head when it's not up there to see on the screen, and at the same time in part because, well, he didn't necessarily have the ambition to become a major director on multi-million dollar movies).

Corman's storytelling, along with writer Jim Jerome, is chock-full of great anecdotes, about himself (a couple of stories about his pre-filmmaking days are pivotal to understanding his development into an iconoclast, even to something like a time he got mugged while in the Navy), but also about the people he worked with - and there are COUNTLESS people to mention like Nicholson but also the young up-n-comers he had in the 70s like Joe Dante and Jonathan Demme and Allan Arkush and those women filmmakers he also got to get some movies made (not a lot but, hey, he tried, i.e. **STUDENT NURSES** and **SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE** have his name - he doesn't mention it in the book but **SUBURBIA** by Spheeris is another good one). At the same time it's important to note this book is a fast read in part because it's not all Corman telling his story; this is a little closer to being like 75-80% a Roger Corman memoir, about his highs and (not terrible # of) lows, and then 25-30% an oral history from people he worked with. That actually helps to put some of what Corman says into a greater context of the time, so that you can see what his generosity - and also at times his stinginess and also his stern, no-BS attitude, got as far as collaborators, not to mention as a man who, only once he got in to some bad deals with people who bought New World Pictures in the 80's, never had a legal problem ever).

What keeps it from being an all-time-super-great book, despite all the wonderful stories and all the amazing characters and people he's worked with and the VARIETY of movies he's made (it's easy to underestimate exactly the depth of his taste - as he readily admits the same year of Kurosawa's **DERSU UZALA** he also released **DEATH RACE 2000**, or **STUDENT NURSES** alongside **CRIES AND WHISPERS**), is that there's just a teeny, tiny bit of hypocrisy to a couple of moments with Corman as a creator. When he talks about the tough shit he went through with AIP when they started to cut into his films in the 60's and 70's - extraordinary if flawed exploitation epics **THE TRIP** and **GASSS** are not fully as he envisioned them as we

now see them due to the cuts imposed by the indie studio - one feels sympathy.... but then it's hard a few times to reconcile the fact that he had less than zero mercy when cutting into one of the hallowed bunch who directed THE TERROR, Monte Hellman, on his film COCKFIGHTER, or on other movies. One might say he was the mogul solely, it wasn't a whole group of people deciding like at AIP, but he also shows no awareness or even recognition of what he had become as someone who was running a studio and owned ALL the films. It's undeniable he gave starts to a great, great many people, and I will love and respect the man forever for that... at the same time, that kind of irked me.

Also, though he eventually in the later part of the book recognizes this part of it, I wondered early on if he would point out the fact that, well, frankly a good number of the movies he made were crap. Of course he made a lot of very good movies - the Poe ones should make him known for real film people forever, nevermind The WILD ANGELS or BUCKET OF BLOOD - but he also churned out movies that, perhaps deservedly do, have been mocked on the likes of MST3K. It's only until later on in the book that he acknowledges that, yeah, I know, I could've gone farther and swung for the fences with the majors or tried for more money for my productions... but I just didn't. By this point I was glad to see some of this introspection, but it comes after a while.

Yet, all the same, these are quibbles ultimately in what is an essential reading for those who want to understand what the history of the 2nd half of the 20th century's independent cinema was about; as people like Cassavetes and George Romero made their marks, Corman carved out a massive piece of movie history by simply, continuously, almost compulsively it would seem, to *make movies*. That's the key to this and the Lumet book, aside from all of the technical advise or things like understanding psychology with actors or doing this or that when it comes to tricks or ideas in the process of it - that if you are constantly trying not just to churn shit out but to also challenge oneself, even just barely, it's bound to result in some fascinating things to show the world.

In other words, Corman is a man of contradictions, foibles, generosity, anger (at times), pride, and awe at the good things in the world.

"On occasion, now and then, he'd make a good movie." - Jack Nicholson

(Roger Corman) "In science-fiction films, the monster should always be bigger than the leading lady."

Jackie "the Librarian" says

Who needs expensive sets or believable special effects? Just film it fast and keep moving! It may not be good, but it won't be boring. I actually enjoy many of Corman's movies, especially the ones with Vincent Price. If you love cheesy old horror movies, or want to know where Jack Nicholson got his start, this is a fun look at the B movie industry before it went straight to video.

Stephen says

Roger Corman is a rather remarkable fellow among the many remarkable people who make movies in Hollywood. His influence extends well beyond the 55 movies he directed and the 385 he produced. This is because he mentored young actors like Jack Nicholson and Peter Fonda and young directors like Martin

Scorsese, Peter Bogdanovich, Francis Ford Coppola and Ron Howard. All of these people (and a number of others) wrote personal reflections about their days working with Corman, which are included in this book. How many Roger Corman movies will you admit to seeing? The Attack of the Crab Monsters (1957), Machine-Gun Kelly (1958), Teenage Cave Man (1958), She Gods of Shark Reef (1958) A Bucket of Blood (1959), The Little Shop of Horrors (1960), The Young Racers (1963), The Wild Angels (1966), The Trip (1967), Bloody Mama (1970), Death Race 2000 (1975), Grand Theft Auto (1977), Rock 'n' Roll High School (1979), Battle Beyond the Stars (1980), Munchies (1987), Frankenstein Unbound (1990). Never pretentious, his goal was to produce movies with much lower budgets and much shorter shoots than the major studios. He did both well. His mother probably didn't raise him to make exploitation movies (he holds an engineering degree from Stanford) but he figured out how to do it very well.
