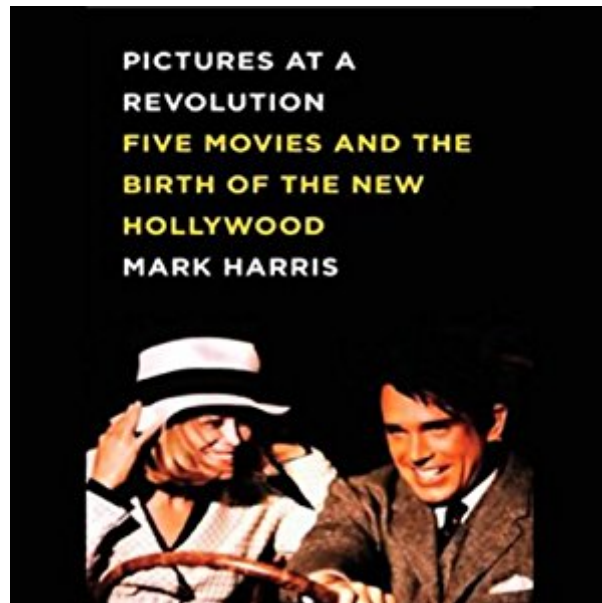




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Pictures At A Revolution: Five Movies And The Birth Of The New Hollywood



Synopsis

The epic human drama behind the making of the five movies nominated for Best Picture in 1967-Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, The Graduate, In the Heat of the Night, Doctor Dolittle, and Bonnie and Clyde-and through them, the larger story of the cultural revolution that transformed Hollywood, and America, forever. It's the mid-1960s, and westerns, war movies, and blockbuster musicals such as Mary Poppins and The Sound of Music dominate the box office. The Hollywood studio system, with its cartels of talent and its production code, is hanging strong, or so it would seem. Meanwhile, Warren Beatty wonders why his career isn't blooming after the success of his debut in Splendor in the Grass; Mike Nichols wonders if he still has a career after breaking up with Elaine May; and even though Sidney Poitier has just made history by becoming the first black Best Actor winner, he's still feeling completely cut off from opportunities other than the same "noble black man" role. And a young actor named Dustin Hoffman struggles to find any work at all. By the time the Oscar ceremonies roll around in the spring of 1968, when In the Heat of the Night wins the 1967 Academy Award for Best Picture, a cultural revolution has hit Hollywood with the force of a tsunami. The unprecedented violence and nihilism of fellow nominee Bonnie and Clyde has shocked old-guard reviewers but helped catapult Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway into counterculture stardom and made the movie one of the year's biggest box-office successes. Just as unprecedented has been the run of nominee The Graduate, which launched first-time director Mike Nichols into a long and brilliant career in filmmaking, to say nothing of what it did for Dustin Hoffman, Simon and Garfunkel, and a generation of young people who knew that whatever their future was, it wasn't in plastics. Sidney Poitier has reprised the noble-black-man role, brilliantly, not once but twice, in Guess Who's Coming to Dinner and In the Heat of the Night, movies that showed in different ways both how far America had come on the subject of race in 1967 and how far it still had to go. What City of Nets did for Hollywood in the 1940s and Easy Riders, Raging Bulls for the 1970s, Pictures at a Revolution does for Hollywood and the cultural revolution of the 1960s. As we follow the progress of these five movies, we see an entire industry change and struggle and collapse and grow-we see careers made and ruined, studios born and destroyed, and the landscape of possibility altered beyond all recognition. We see some outsized personalities staking the bets of their lives on a few films that became iconic works that defined the generation-and other outsized personalities making equally large wagers that didn't pan out at all. The product of extraordinary and unprecedented access to the principals of all five films, married to twenty years' worth of insight covering the film industry and a bewitching storyteller's gift, Mark Harris's Pictures at a Revolution is a bravura accomplishment and a work that feels iconic itself. --This text refers to an

out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 17 hours and 25 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Tantor Audio

Audible.com Release Date: March 19, 2008

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00169X1J6

Best Sellers Rank: #7 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Movies > History & Criticism #9 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Arts & Entertainment > Performing Arts #17 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Pop Culture > General

Customer Reviews

Harris's book is well-written and manages to present its material without pandering or (the other extreme) becoming nerdy. That's high praise for any book these days, no matter what the topic. As promised, "Pictures at a Revolution" does tell the stories of the five films nominated for the 1967 Best Picture award, from conception of the films through the awards night, with a quick "Where are they now?" (or more accurately, a "Where did they go immediately after?") section at the end. The organization is loosely chronological, swapping among the story lines of the movies in question. Since the films were only connected by their place in time (there was no common director or writer among the five, they weren't all from the same studio; that sort of thing), the interlacing of the stories does lead to a mental stop-start for the reader. But Harris's style keeps it all entertaining enough that it is well worth remembering just where "Dr. Dolittle" was when we last had a sighting of it. The book has received high praise from other reviewers with deep knowledge of the industry and the art, and the good news is that those recommendations hold up for the casual reader. I give the book four stars rather than five because I, at least, did not come away with any new way of looking at that time in moviemaking or model for understanding it. Perhaps the word "Revolution" overpromises. Harris does a wonderful job of capturing the sense of the new and the sense of change that was afoot in 1968, as the awards were being given. The fact that following that landmark year some good "big" movies were made and many very bad "little" movies were released is undeniable. And

in looking at those years, that may simply be a case of art imitating life: it felt like a revolution at the time. Highly recommended.

I had read it and had a copy out of the library but decided would be the perfect place to get my own copy. Basically, the book covers the Oscar nominated films of 1967--a watershed point for American cinema. The five nominees were *Bonnie & Clyde*, *The Graduate*, *In the Heat of the Night*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, and *Doctor Doolittle*--the latter costing far more than the other four combined and then tanking in every respect. Having just returned from Paris where I visited the grave of Francois Truffaut, my favorite director, I wanted to read again the sections about him as he was supposed to direct *Bonnie & Clyde*--my favorite American film--it could not have been as great. The creative and challenging ins and outs of getting these five films made and shown is fascinating. A great book for film fans.

This book is impressive to say the least. It is well written and excellently researched, the author realistically transports the reader back to the golden era of 1967. The book analyzes the five nominees for best picture at the time and does a great job of analyzing their effects on society at large. It is a fun walk down memory lane that is full of comical, social commentary. It is made more interesting by the fact that the latter part of the 60s was a notable time of social change and the movies explored in the book explore this. It is truly a masterwork of film analysis which is made evident by the authors expertise (Mark Harris). A great read for any movie buff.

It's common these days to look back on the old studio system with nostalgia. This book is about the year it crashed and burned. *Five Pictures at a Revolution* is the story of how new independent directors competed with some of the old hands in 1967. As the author aptly puts it, "Warren Beatty who looked like a movie star, was a producer. Dustin Hoffman who looked like a producer, had become a movie star." "Sidney Poitier, who looked like no movie star had ever looked," was the biggest box office in history, and Hollywood didn't know what to do with him. If you are old enough to remember the sputtering end of "old Hollywood," you might remember some of the dreadful movies it produced in those final years. Restricted by censorship, the system went crazy producing big budget musicals, James Bond spy films and Bible epics. Movie executives were out of touch with the mood of the country--which was mired in an unpopular war, the civil rights movement and a host of other causes. Despite huge dissatisfaction within American society, Hollywood movies reflected little change. Then, in 1967 *Dr. Doolittle* competed with *In the Heat of the Night*, *The Graduate*,

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner and Bonnie and Clyde for Best Picture. What a year. Mark Harris had access to many of the folks who worked on the five movies and he's a gifted storyteller and journalist. This is a great book for someone who wants to find out about how movies went from apolitical musicals, epics, thrillers and dramas to irreverent works by Woody Allen, Stephen Spielberg, Nora Ephron etc.

A fantastic book on a slice of Hollywood (and by extension American) history. Skillfully woven together, the clarity of the book is remarkable given the amount of detail devoted to discussing the creation of five wildly different films along with their creators, stars and producers. Heavyweights such as Rex Harrison, Rod Steiger, Mike Nichols, Dustin Hoffman, Sidney Poitier, producer Arthur Jacobs, and many, many more are covered with amazing thoroughness, and even pathos in the case of the late Spencer Tracy. Harris portrays the unique pressures that each film was under, be they from studio executives, the press, the moviegoing public, the censors, and most notably the changing American cultural landscape of the late 1960s. Can't recommend this book enough.

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