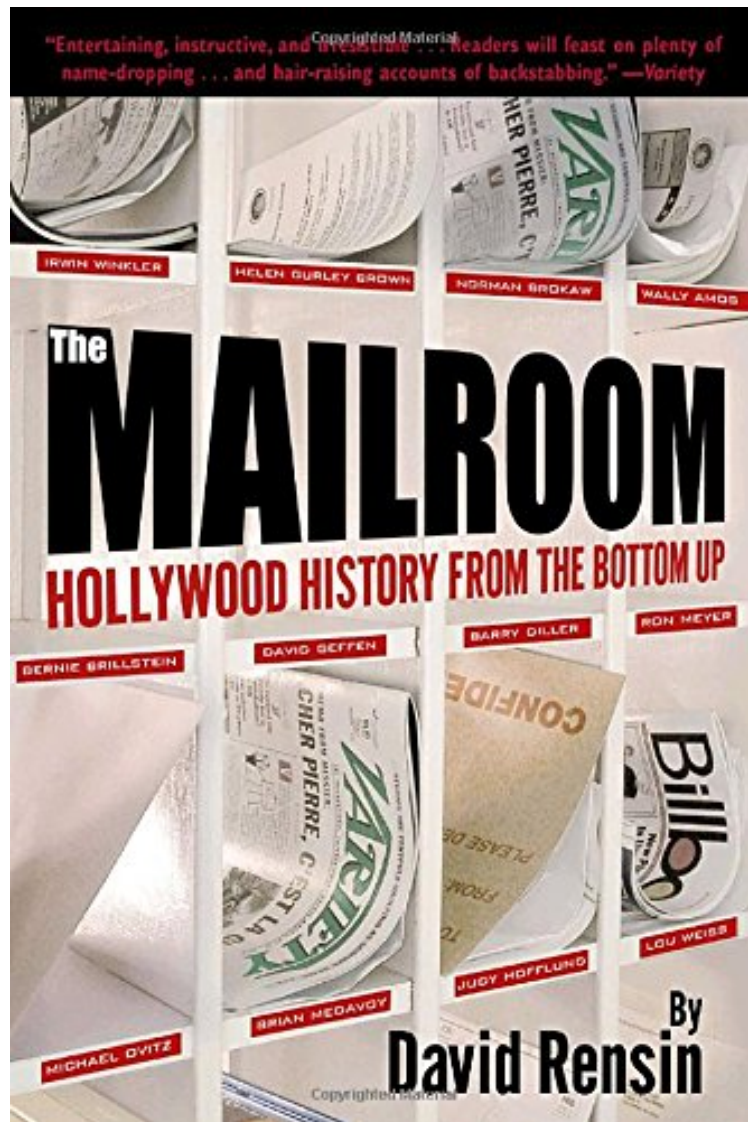


(Download) The Mailroom: Hollywood History from the Bottom Up

## The Mailroom: Hollywood History from the Bottom Up

David Rensin

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**David Rensin : The Mailroom: Hollywood History from the Bottom Up** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Mailroom: Hollywood History from the Bottom Up:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Original Shark Tank By Suzanne Faris For some reason, when I picked up David Rensin's The Mailroom: Hollywood History from the Bottom up, I just expected it to be a book-length exhortation for the chronically un-motivated. It may have had elements of that, but it was so much more. The book focuses on the William Morris Agency's widely imitated sink-or-swim mail-room training program for agents. For Hollywood buffs, it is a history of Hollywood (and to a lesser extent, show-business New York), not only from the

bottom up, as billed, but from the inside out. Life lessons abound with hilarious (and sad) stories of savvy cutthroats (the mailroom boy who edges a long-serving agents secretary out of her job), screw-ups and hyperventilating basket cases who washed out. The special challenges faced by women and minorities in the program are sensitively addressed (with insights from one-time trainee-secretary Helen Gurley Brown, among others). The role of nepotism and connections is unmistakable (e.g., George Burns nephew), but interestingly it emerges that sometimes the nepotism worked out in spite of everything (George Burns conscientious nephew). and at other times resulted with the agency being stuck with lazy, entitled incompetents (Doris Days son). Dirty little secrets emerge, such as why WMA and other agencies started requiring college degrees (to avoid hiring minority applicants) in a business where street smarts, cunning, ruthlessness and what might be called emotional intelligence were and still are infinitely far more important than traditional book smarts. Hilarious tales of adolescent and 20-something males walking in on naked or scantily clad actresses) and pranks (e.g. letters with forged signatures from top agents, hired call girls posing as reporters, and even gluing Doris Days son, Terry Melchers shoes to the floor, since apparently he couldn't be bothered to wear them) alternate with insight into the world of show-business agents and the entertainment industry in general. The most important life lessons I took away were (1) that if you want to succeed in any endeavor, you must be willing to start at rock-bottom, however much humiliation and grunt work that inevitably entails; formal education and superficially impressive-sounding academic degrees are no substitute for grit, determination and what Rensin would term intestinal fortitude; and (2) oh yes, in the world of Hollywood agencies, as in most other areas of life, a-holes almost always finish first! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Essential Hollywood ReadBy RaquelA cool inside-look at the intense mailroom culture in Hollywood. Great read, especially for anyone looking to get into the industry. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four StarsBy likaInteresting slice of times and changes in the major agencies related by the "survivors".

Its like a plot from a Hollywood potboiler: start out in the mailroom, end up a mogul. But for many, it happens to be true. Some of the biggest names in entertainment including David Geffen, Barry Diller, and Michael Ovitz started their dazzling careers in the lowly mailroom. Based on more than two hundred interviews, David Rensin unfolds the never-before-told history of an American institution in the voices of the people who lived it. Through nearly seven decades of glamour and humiliation, lousy pay and incredible perks, killer egos and a kill-or-be-killed ethos, you'll go where the trainees go, learn what they must do to get ahead, and hear the best insider stories from the Hollywood everyone knows about but no one really knows. A vibrant tapestry of dreams, desire, and exploitation, *The Mailroom* is not only an engrossing read but a crash course, taught by the experts, on how to succeed in Hollywood.

From Publishers Weekly Rensin (coauthor, *Don't Stand Too Close to a Naked Man*) captures the ambition, manipulative plotting and hustler mentality of a few Hollywood mailroom employees in this series of raunchy, realistic interviews with some top agents who started out in the mailroom. As with any entry-level gig, "the hours are long, the pay... abysmal." Star mailroom grads from the William Morris Agency, Creative Artists Agency, ICM and others voice conflicting views, making Rensin's book an uncompromisingly truthful tell-all of what it takes to make it in the movie biz. William Morris's Norman Brokaw recalls, "I made it a point to develop relationships early on," while Bernie Brillstein's a bit more blunt: "I kissed ass." Most of the agents admit opening up private correspondence and packages, insisting, "everybody did it." Rensin also exposes affairs with secretaries to learn company secrets, fights over use of phones that led to wrestling matches, and homophobia. Sam Haskell, William Morris's worldwide head of television, offers a different take: "Your primary power is your character and your integrity." Rensin furnishes fresh anecdotes about an embarrassed novice who didn't recognize Judy Garland, or another who believed in Marilyn Monroe despite a casting specialist calling her "just another blonde." Clashing views of Mike Ovitz, from "a superb leader" to someone who preferred "style over content" and to whom "appearances were everything," help explain Ovitz's meteoric rise and massive collapse. Most notably, Rensin shows that the road from mailroom to mogul is a rough one. The stories are amusing, intriguing and sometimes horrifying, but Rensin, to his credit, never dilutes sordid details. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Rensin's upward-mobility saga suggests that aspiring Hollywood conquistadors should start in the mailroom of a talent agency instead of hanging around soda fountains in tight sweaters, waiting to be discovered, or essaying other such fabled, fame-and-fortune-seeking ploys. Focusing on the cesspools of power behind the stars--the William Morris Agency, Creative Artists Agency, and lesser stokers of the dream machine--Rensin outlines the path to real power in filmdom by relaying the personal stories and reminiscences of the back-channel operatives who wield it. He reveals no shortages of backbiting, antisocial behavior, and power politics in the mailroom, though the place lacks the glamour usually gleaned to gild such showbiz exposes. Do readers dig the dirt on the David Geffens and Barry Dillers of the world as much as that on the Winona Ryders and Mickey Rourkes? Well, if they're money minded, they ought to. The goods Rensin's got on the likes of Michael Ovitz makes his ilk as exciting as the stars an Ovitz lucratively manipulates. Mike Tribby Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Entertaining, instructive, and irresistible . . . Readers will feast on plenty of name-dropping . . . and hair-raising accounts of backstabbing. Variety A TERRIFIC BOOK . . . Loaded with great stories,

unusual insights, and laugh-out-loud humor. You will love this one.

**LARRY KING** FASCINATING . . . A bracing lesson in the acquisition and exercise of power . . . with a big emphasis on the maxim that what doesn't kill you will make you stronger. *Los Angeles Times*

**THE MAILROOM IS A BLAST TO READ.** This is the way Hollywood operates: the fun, the giddy high, the espionage, and the wrenching twists of luck and disaster. David Rensin is a master at eliciting the truth nobody else captures. *CAMERON CROWE*

**SHAMELESS SCHMOOZING,** casting couch know-how, plotting and hustling are all detailed in *The Mailroom*. *The New York Post* (Required Reading)

**FASCINATING . . . [THE MAILROOM] REALLY DELIVERS.** *People*

**A-LIST HONCHOS . . . DISH ON THEIR RISE FROM PEONS TO POWER PLAYERS.** *US Weekly* This is indeed Hollywood history, more specifically a cogent account of how talent agencies have evolved since [William] Morris was ruled by executives in size 36-short suits. Rensin's clever use of personal memories as mosaic pieces, arranged in patterns to form an industrywide portrait, is history for grown-ups. *Variety*

Coming from the William Morris mailroom as I have, [I found] this book [to be] the truth of what I experienced. . . . Its hilarious, a bit crazy, and it should make anyone wonder why people put their careers in the hands of these idiots . . . and remember, I'm one of them. If you have a child, make sure he or she reads this before starting at the bottom anywhere. *BERNIE BRILLSTEIN*

Founding partner of Brillstein-Grey, WMA 1955

**A riotous history of all the Hollywood movers and players who came into the industry through the mailrooms of the big talent agencies.** *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto)

A worthy successor to Studs Terkel, Rensin delivers not only a riveting history of one of the most powerful springboards in Hollywood but a must-read for anyone with grand ambitions. *CATHERINE CRIER*

Author of *The Case Against Lawyers*

**A THOROUGHLY ENTERTAINING ORAL BIOGRAPHY OF A TINSELTOWN INSTITUTION.** *The San Francisco Examiner*

Here is the quintessential Hollywood Roshomon. . . . David Rensin has impossibly and heroically channeled Studs Terkel and Harold Robbins all at once. This is a pinball machine clanging secret truths that move and careen as brashly as the movers who blurt their guts onto every shockingly entertaining page. And the best part is that we learn that people who are now very, very rich were forced to do very, very humiliating things to achieve such. What a refreshing equalizer for all of us. *BILL ZEHME*

Author of *The Way You Wear Your Hat: Frank Sinatra and the Lost Art of Living*

David Rensin's book offers a fascinating look at some of the most powerful people and institutions in Hollywood. Its packed with entertaining anecdotes . . . cautionary tales, and survival tips for those who dare to try their luck in one of the world's most unpredictable businesses. *KIM MASTERS*

Author of *Keys to the Kingdom*

As the maven of the mailroom, David Rensin puts forth an often-hilarious glimpse of life at the bottom. *PETER BART*

Editor in Chief, *Variety*

Rensin captures the ambition, manipulative plotting, and hustler mentality . . . in this series of raunchy, realistic interviews . . . making [the] book an uncompromisingly truthful tell-all of what it takes to make it in the movie biz. . . . The stories are amusing, intriguing, and sometimes horrifying, but Rensin, to his credit, never dilutes sordid details. *Publishers Weekly*

An oral history of a crucial Tinseltown institution, related by some folks who make Machiavelli look like a pussycat . . . Edgy, frenetic, and entertaining reports from the room that launched a thousand deals. *Kirkus*