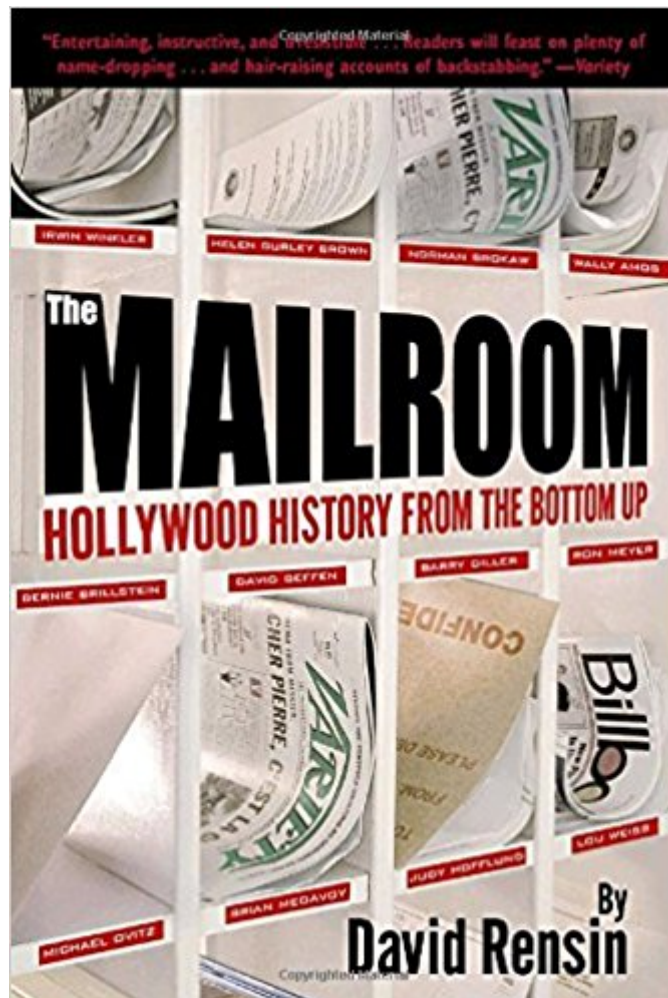




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The Mailroom: Hollywood History From The Bottom Up



Synopsis

It's 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.

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Customer Reviews

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.

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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

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Insightful and told me more than I imagined about the Agent Kingdom. Most of us on the outside don't got a clue and ain't gonna get one, but sometimes a book comes along that gives you the whole rotten armadillo, tail and all. Who da thunk they are such a morally corrupt club! Such stinky evil is dang near impressive! I mean, look at all the money they are able to blow every season on all sorts of junk, twenty million on this piece of junk, fifty mil on that one. And they lose everybody else's money--but keep their percentage. As a screenwriter who plays no games, and I'm a real penny-pincher, too, I am blown away by how much dog-eared idiot-level failure they keep circulating

in the Whirlpool of Genius down there in Hollywood. This book shows exactly how they expend rock-star energy to try and convince themselves that they are the smartest toughest most brilliant decision-makers in the universe. And in the end, I just have to ask: How come they don't know that we are all bored to tears with their remake of a remake of a remake? I have decided after reading this book, that they just don't know how to make a profit. The whole Hollywood machine could be making triple what it makes, but EGO has become more important than financial gain. So they'll just have to suck on that half-gone popsicle a while.

Step 1: Get a job in the mailroom of a major agency. Step 2: Fight to maintain a solid workload, social life, and sleep schedule. Step 3: Realize step 2 is hopeless; continue struggling on in the mailroom. Step 4: Decision time...a: I have my BS/MBA/JD, and experience far beyond answering phones and running errands.. Why am I wasting my time babysitting others and dealing with this guy's stress? That's it, I'm out, back to the job market! b: The normal person might need their sleep and socializing and free time. But me? This is it. This is my passion. I live for this... Maybe you got to Step 4. Maybe you chose 'b'. I sure hope you chose correctly! You really can't know what the best choice is until you at least get to the point where you know enough first hand about the job and what it takes to rise to the top. In my opinion, waiting until you have enough experience is too late. If you have interest in any job, it's best to research what you can NOW. "The Mailroom" by David Rensin is an engaging collection of countless anecdotes from former mailroom employees, of various agencies. Many people talk about how the entertainment business can be shallow and one of the most cutthroat industries out there. These numerous aggregated accounts only reaffirm that notion, but it is incredibly entertaining to hear! I would say this book is awfully informative as well. It definitely provides a laundry list of names. Some you will see in future studies and current Hollywood-related affairs, others you will never see again. The real lesson is seeing what the mailroom workers have gone through in their experiences. Some are hilarious, while others frightening. As far as this book in your journey, I highly recommend you give it a read. It's easy and fun to read through, but also prepares you mentally. Hollywood is like nowhere else, and this is just a glimpse in it. If you think you're still interested, if you still think you have it in you, go for it! It is unbelievable some of the stories you'll hear in this book, so read on...

A cool inside-look at the intense mailroom culture in Hollywood. Great read, especially for anyone looking to get into the industry.

I love entertainment business books and this one does not disappoint. Unless you're in the biz, which I'm not, almost all of the names will be unfamiliar. This book has no story. It's a known fact that a way into the entertainment industry is to work in an agency's mailroom, eat sh*t, and hope for your break. This book is a series of interviews with the former mailroom attendees on the good, the bad, and the mental make-up of the wannabes struggling to get out of "mailroom jail". It's funny, informative, and one of those books you can't put down. Many industries have a proving ground. In investment banking we put them on as a trading or sales assistant hoping they will pick up the lingo and learn on the fly. But the agency mailroom seems to be about feeding egos of senior agent's with much more screaming, yelling and attention paid to personal chores. They do mention many of the nice agents as well as the agents who were best at teaching the mailroom guys. My favorite stories are about CAA because it is next door to my favorite hotel the Peninsula and because of the Mike Ovitz aura. Mike doesn't come off particularly well in the book but partner Ron Meyer does come off as a particularly sharp and nice guy. The positives and negatives of the mailroom run from taking your bosses stool sample in the doctor to having nude actresses answer the door. I also enjoyed the stories of the CAA mailroom which had a particularly high level of paranoia. I had met media mogul and former agent, Mike Medavoy so it was interesting seeing his son's quotes who was eventually fired due to information leaked to his father. If you have any interest in the business side of Hollywood, you'll like this book. Other books of interest would be "Wannabe" about an MBA's attempt to succeed at the low levels of Hollywood, and Lynda Obst's book "Hello, He Lied" about her journey from journalist to producer.

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