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Jeff Menne, *Post-Fordist Cinema. Hollywood Auteurs and the Corporate Counterculture*

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- 1 Jeff Menne's book focuses on the 1962-1975 period which corresponds to the establishment of New Hollywood. It explores how the patterns of industry initiated in 1962 by Lew Wasserman when he bought Universal he conceived of as a federalist organization had become dominant by 1975.
- 2 The long thirty-two-page introduction focuses on the way in which the Auteur Theory has been instrumentalized within the Hollywood studios. Starting with Paramount's Frank Yablans failed association with the Directors Company (Coppola, Bogdanovich and Friedkin) and Hollywood outsiders' renegotiation of power in the early 1970s, Menne discusses in depth what Jon Lewis calls the updated version of "the old Hollywood practice of contracting talent." His analysis shows extensive knowledge of the critics' views at the time of the new forms of resistance in the context of the baby-boom generation and its preferred art form, cinema, and of "the long march of economic history" (6).
- 3 Menne's four main chapters — "Post (Henry and John) Fordism"; "Kirk Douglas and Guerilla Economy, The Cinema of Defection"; "The Corporate Counterculture and Robert Altman's *Lion's Gate*, Television Totalities"; "Zanuck-Brown and the Privately Held Company and The Ethos of Incorporation"; and "BBS and the Law of Unnatural Persons" — all try to assess in great detail how the problems at the heart of the

economic system actually led to a redefinition and reorganization of creativity in the film industry.

- 4 Addressing the emergence of a “creative economy,” he emphasizes the second term, “the arrangements of capitalism” (7) and the overall critique of the division of labor, which can be somewhat overwhelming. However, each of the four chapters meticulously examines the filmmakers’ modes of reconception of their relations to the industry in the era of the proliferation of small firms and the conglomeration of studios.
- 5 Chapter One tackles more particularly the way in which Kirk Douglas reshaped the cowboy figure into a guerilla warrior in *Lonely Are The Brave* (Miller, 1962), which mirrored the rise of figures of guerilla organization in the post-Fordist phase of modernity. Menne also foregrounds how Douglas had to eventually tone down the discourse of rebellion against the majors when he created his own company, Bryna Productions. He was careful to send out the message that he was mainly interested not so much in a revolution against “the tyrants” as in a redistribution of power between the majors and the smaller firms.
- 6 Chapter Two deals with what the author defines as “the genre of defection” — as a literal reference to the draft dodgers and a figurative one to independent movie producers — which in the years 1967-74 reformulates on screen the great project of the New Left. One of Menne’s contentions is that directors like Scorsese (*Taxi Driver*, 1976) and others use the cinema of defection as a form of imaginative resistance to an all-powerful corporation. He also examines the seminal role played by autonomous subunits within a larger studio such as Robert Altman’s Lion’s Gate in Zanuck and Brown’s company, which used the ethos of the counterculture to put up resistance to the “grubby” practices of the corporate structure.
- 7 In chapter Three, Menne focuses on Spielberg’s early career and more specifically on how, despite the wide success of his disaster movie *Jaws*, he was still perceived at the time as an *auteur* along with George Lucas.
- 8 In his last chapter, Jeff Menne turns to Schneider’s BBS Productions (*The King of Marvin Garden*, Rafelson, 1972) and explores the fascinating way in which the Hollywood firm played on its association with various countercultural forces like the Black Panthers to reshape the counterculture critique of the corporation into the essence of its own corporate identity.
- 9 But the book’s most interesting section may very well be the brief *Afterword on Auteurs, Amateurs, Animators* which discusses the autonomy of the artist in the post-Fordist economy. Menne returns to the seminal notion of “creative economy” to explore how Pixar Animation Studios (*Toy Story*, John Lasseter, 1995; *A Bug’s Life*, John Lasseter, 1998) had first resisted Disney under the egis of Steve Jobs before the latter finally agreed to the 2006 merger. Over the course of a few short pages which should have been expanded through a whole chapter, he discusses the extent to which Pixar’s creative culture had an apparently big enough transformative effect on the larger studio to preserve its integrity and be able to redefine its own physical architecture in the campus-like “fun factory” and extended “family” of Emeryville, California.
- 10 Altogether, Jeff Menne’s study of the 1962-1975 period of a post-Fordist cinema which has successfully blurred the boundaries between labor and leisure so strictly held apart in Fordism is well documented and highly informative. It makes for a demanding but

very stimulating read, even though a somewhat arid one at times whenever focusing in great detail on the economic intricacies of filmmaking.

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