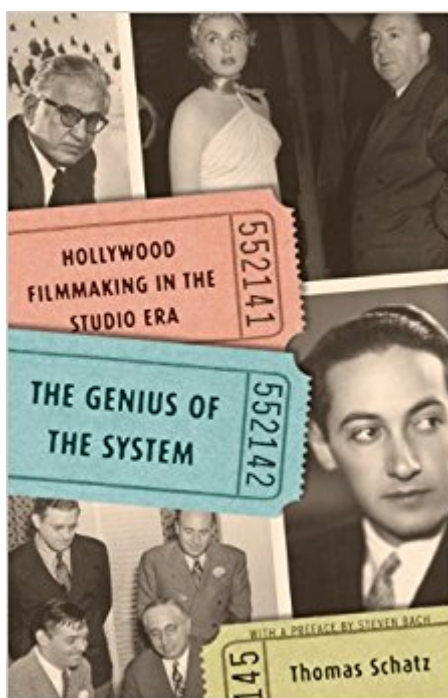


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# The Genius Of The System: Hollywood Filmmaking In The Studio Era



## Synopsis

In *The Genius of the System*, Thomas Schatz recalls Hollywood's Golden Age from the 1920s until the dawn of television in the late 1940s, when quality films were produced swiftly and cost efficiently thanks to the intricate design of the system. Schatz takes us through the rise and fall of individual careers and the making and unmaking of movies such as *Frankenstein*, *Casablanca*, and Hitchcock's *Notorious*. Through detailed analysis of major Hollywood moviemakers including Universal, Warner Bros., and MGM, he reminds us of a time when studios had distinct personalities and the relationship between contracts and creativity was not mutually exclusive.

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## Customer Reviews

In this original, monumental survey of Hollywood's film studios during their most glorious period, Schatz, professor at the University of Texas and author of *Hollywood Genres*, in contrast with the directorial theories of Andrew Sarris and other film historians, describes the creative give-and-take, the symbiotic accord between creators and front offices, in which the styles of writers, directors and stars fused with studio management structures, production operations, talent pools, narrative traditions and market strategies. Analytically and with anecdote examining the financial as well as creative workings of MGM, Warner Bros., Paramount, Universal and RKO in the era of Thalberg, Selznick, Zanuck and Hitchcock, Schatz demonstrates that at the heart of each studio's house style were the star-genre formulations (Bette Davis melodramas, Humphrey Bogart thrillers, Boris Karloff horror films, Gene Kelly musicals) that nowadays, as they are recirculated and rediscovered by young viewers, are all that remain of the great studios and of the vigorous, dynamic men and

women who sustained them. Photos. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Several other histories of Hollywood's studio system have already been published, including Robert Stanley's *The Celluloid Empire* (LJ 5/15/78), Douglas Gomery's *The Hollywood Studio System* (LJ 1/86), and Ethan Mordden's *The Hollywood Studios* (LJ 5/15/88). All these books have some value, but Mordden and Schatz win top honors. Larger libraries should purchase both books, as they complement each other. Mordden's primary interest is aesthetics; Schatz's is business. Mordden's writing is sometimes brilliant, while Schatz's is only good, but Schatz has obviously done a lot of research, and he puts it to good use in a very readable book. John Smothers, Monmouth Cty. Lib., Manalapan, Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If you are interested in the history of Hollywood during the studio era, this is the book for you! It is what my history professors in college would have called the "definitive" work on the subject. That usually meant long. It certainly does not fall short in that department. Starting with the silent movie era and progressing to the advent of television, you will be familiarized with the technology, economics, and politics of the industry. If you are looking for a work filled with titillating Hollywood gossip, you are going to be disappointed. It is not that kind of book. I was a little perplexed by the weight given to various movies and personalities. For example, very little was said about the filming of *Gone With The Wind*. Yet, a great deal of space was devoted to the movies and careers of Abbott and Costello. Interesting. It is not a fast read and at times can be a bit dry, but well worth your time if you want to learn more about this colorful bygone age.

I was looking for a book that would take me through the development of the Hollywood movie industry from the early days through the golden era. I found it in this book. It is basically laid out in a sequential fashion, but jumps from studio to studio and even from movie to movie. Personalities are detailed as well as conflicts between individuals and studios. The behind the scenes stories of the rise and fall of various studio heads and others were fascinating. For anyone interested in an in depth review of the golden era, this book is excellent. I learned so much I had no idea about. Highly recommended.

Good information but reads like a textbook and is kind of hard to follow. It's taken me a couple

weeks to read this one when normally it would take me a couple days.

Books that deal with any aspect of Hollywood's golden age comprise most of my non-fiction, and now that I've finished "The Genius of the System" I'm wondering why it took me so long to get around to reading it. This is one of the best books about old Hollywood I've ever read. Schatz has clearly not just invested a ton of time in researching his topic, but has found away to weave a number of strands together so that the reader is able to grasp a wide-ranging and ever-dynamic topic without getting lost. This is a must-read for any fan of this era.

Usually reviews start with things like "If you like....then you will love....."This book gets into the personalities of the studio moguls, and their relationships. Each (major) studio is analyzed by their various strong points and weak points and how they each found their particular niche in the overall mosaic.Schatz give us a great over all perspective that is extremely interesting and fills in the voids we have when we only watch the movies. Movies are history and we can see the tremendous effort and genius that did in fact give us the Golden Era.

The author takes us through the story of four Hollywood studios: MGM, WB, Universal and Selznick. No mention or Paramount or Fox, and RKO. To make this simpler. And within selected studies refers to what he calls its driving forces. So that is the story of certain characters of studio system which he calls the system geniuses. Definitely not are all. But the material is interesting and can be read pleasantly. Separating each of the studies periods and speech about they separately. Rich in anecdotes.

I found this book to be both interesting and enjoyable to read. It is a historical account of relevant events and materials from the Golden Age of Hollywood, documented along a timeline. The most notable films are covered, as well as some of the stories behind them. It is not an exhaustive book, but if you know your movies from that time period, then it is easy to fill in a lot of the blanks. Since I am a researcher and collector of movies from this period, this was both interesting and informative.

I owned Schatz's book earlier, and it is like no other in that it takes each studio as a separate entity, although MGM gets more bites of the apple because of the three volcanic personalities (Mayer, Thalberg and Selznick) who characterized it during this era. Now you understand why Warner Brothers made the movies it did, there was conscious thinking going on.

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