Flashback: A Brief History of Film Study Guide

Flashback: A Brief History of Film by Louis Giannetti

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Contents

Plot Summary

Flashback: A Brief History of Film by Louis Giannetti covers the history of film, focusing on the years between 1870 and 2005. It creates a time-line of inventions that pushed the movie industry forward. The book also highlights individuals who impacted the movie industry through their creativity and innovations.

The book opens with a look back to the Renaissance where the idea of moving pictures was mentioned by Leonardo Da Vinci. It highlights precursors of film as it is known today then tackles the heart of film creation in the late 1800s. The first few chapters showcase the inventions that make movies possible. They address the politics of patents and product usage, both in Europe and in America.

As the book progresses in a linear fashion, decade by decade, it is divided into chapters relating to American cinema in a specific decade followed by a chapter about European and international cinema in the same decade. The chapters begin with a timeline of important events that occurred during the decade, showing readers how filmmaking and film attendance rose and fell in response to world events. Each chapter highlights the popularity of lack of popularity of film during the decade, along with cinematic triumphs and defeats. The chapters highlight filmmakers who came into prominence as well as films that made an impact on the world, either in a positive or negative manner.

According to the book, movies have been in process for centuries, with the invention of film spurring it forward. As film movies became popular with audiences, movie making became a lucrative business. Filmmaking became a career option. At first creators would produce their own movies, directing and producing them. They listened to the audiences to determine what people wanted. They experimented with screen size, subject matter, and technology.

The Hollywood studio system became a major force in the movie industry with its stars and economic backing, first in the United States, then affecting filmmaking around the world. Europe was known for its experimentation with the art form and cinematic movements that made realism and political statements part of the on-screen experience. Third World countries struggled through political oppression and weak economies, persevering to bring stories to the screen that would affect the world.

The book showed the progression from big-screen television to VHS and DVD and finally, digital technology. It demonstrated how films once focused on any type of movement then progressed to stories. Large screen films were once the biggest money makers, but the digital era changed that. It highlighted the dramatic changes the world has seen in the past century, and touched on the changes in film production and cinema displays since the turn-of-the-century. It offered a projection of where filmmaking might be headed in the future on an international level.

Flashback: A Brief History of Film Chapters 1-4

Flashback: A Brief History of Film Chapters 1-4 Summary and Analysis

Flashback: A Brief History of Film by Louis Giannetti covers the history of film, focusing on the years between 1870 and 2005. it creates a timeline of inventions that pushed the movie industry forward. The book also highlights individuals who impacted the movie industry through their creativity and innovations.

Chapter One, entitled "Beginnings," covered the history of movies before movies were actually in film form. Way back in 1666, a diary entry told about images projected on a wall from a lantern and pictures in glass, creating "white magic." During the late 1800s, the governor of California hired Eadward Muybridge to photograph a horse in action to prove that all four feet left around when the horses and a full gallop. These photos intrigued Jean Louis Meissonier, a Parisian painter, who converted the photographs into silhouettes, which he projected through a Zoetrope, creating an illusion of movement. Impressed by this work, Thomas Edison teamed up with William Dickson to develop a machine that would show moving images. The machine, the Kinetoscope, was patented in 1891. Entrepreneur Norman Raff teamed up with Edison to open a Kinetoscope parlor in 1894. It became a huge success.

Along with the popularity came the realization that films would reach a wider audience if they were projected onto walls and if films were longer than 30 seconds. With increased length, filmmakers began to add story lines and special effects. The Film D'Art was formed in 1908, as actors, composers, and writers banded together to create art.

While movies seemed to be a modern invention, this chapter pointed out that the pieces of film were already in place throughout history. Inventors, artists, and actors worked together through time to create the motion pictures that we know today. Discoveries such as light projection and inventions such as devices that provided persistence of vision to still images, making them appear as if they are in motion, worked together to increase the popularity of film. This chapter went through history in a linear format, showing how each discovery and invention built upon previous discoveries and inventions. It offered a brief overview of how still images turned into moving images first for an individual then for a group. As the excitement of moving images took over the world, movie makers began to experiment with production value and content.

Chapter Two focused almost entirely on the life of David Wark Griffith, who showed the world what movies could be. The film industry was getting larger through the success of the Nickelodeon Era, and studios were pumping out several films a week. Things got political as Griffith began making films. The company he worked for, Biograph, joined others to create The Patent Company, taxing theaters showing their films. William Fox

and Carl Laemmle, founder of Universal at a later date, led independents as they scrambled to escape the clutches of lawyers in New York and New Jersey, the hub of production. They headed out to California as they sought action from the government in an antitrust campaign against the Patents Company, which was eventually disbanded. As Griffith directed, he found actors with incredible talent for portraying emotions that viewers could identify with. This showed the industry that film was more than lighting and movement. It was about stories that connect viewers with what's happening onscreen. Griffith also proved that long films could appeal to an audience.

Chapter Three covered film in the 1920's in America, focusing predominantly on the era of silent film. In 1920, film centered in Hollywood, and silent films were considered perfected by the end of the 1920s. Films were getting longer, and silent dramas needed more focus from the audience so viewers could understand what was going on. If anyone missed a scene, they might miss a major plot point.

Once again, the stage became a conduit to the screen. Vaudeville performers perfected the art of comedic characterization and took it to the screen where film viewers were treated to comedies on film. With comedies, it did not matter if viewers looked away for a minute. They could enjoy a film without worrying about losing the plot.

This era brought forth talents such as Charles Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, and Harry Langdon. Film was now a multimillion dollar industry, and was considered a director's medium as long as directors stayed under budget. Hollywood drew in European talent such as the producers Mauritz Stiller, F. W. Marnau, and Josef von Sternberg. With talented actors such as Greta Garbo, Douglas Fairbanks, and Mary Pickford, these producers and others such as Rex Ingram pushed the artistic boundaries of silent film.

Chapter Three showed the transition of silent film to "talkies." Films had sound in 1921, but the public did not appreciate it. Directors pleased audiences by using the talents of actors who could define a character and tell a story through facial and body movements, and by playing with lighting and scenery. As comedies grew in popularity, character actors drew audiences to the screen. Charles Spencer Chaplin delighted audiences with his tramp routines, Harold Lloyd always had glasses and played characters named Harold, and Harry Langdon entertained audiences as an overgrown baby.

By the end of the decade, things had shifted. The popularity of radio influenced the audience's priorities. They now wanted music and voices in their films. By 1929, "talkies," as films with sound were called, became the rage. Studios scrambled to update their technology, and actors learned to act around microphones and tone down the exuberant physical expressions they once needed for silent film.

Chapter Four addressed the history of film in war-ravaged Europe in the 1920s. Following the Russian Revolution, there was an increased popularity of film throughout the USSR. Vladimir Lenin started a program that used film to show people in the country the strength of collective action. Directors began experimenting more with editing, and demonstrated that film could be used to tell a story not only through

character acting and sets, but through camera angles as well. Lev Kuleshov proved that a specific edit sequence could display emotion while Sergei Einstein used the camera to show the power of the masses in a scene.

In Germany, films highlighted man's dark struggle, and films were produced in studios that intensified the mood on screen. Directors such as F. W. Murnau used camera movement to tell stories in long takes rather than splicing together smaller clips. Other German producers stood out with their unique filming and subject matter. Ernst Lubitsch made a name for himself with his historical spectaculars and sly comedy. Fritz Lang created thrillers and folkloric movies.

In France, films emphasized the absurd. Directors experimented with social messages, visuals, and audience tolerances. Abel Gance used cameras, on their own, to create the new visual effect he called "polyvision." Directors Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dali shocked audiences with onscreen sex and violence.

Chapter Four focused on the way war affected filming industry in Europe. While America was mildly inconvenienced by European wars and uprisings, Europe was devastated. The lighthearted comedies in America contrasted sharply with the darker films rising up in Europe. Europe had left the Impressionist era and filmmakers were experimenting with Surrealism, Expressionism, and Dadaism. They looked for new ways of seeing and exploring the subconscious while exploring subject matter, camera angles, and audience reactions.

Movies were used for political reasons, supporting a cause, or used to reveal resentment of political undercurrents. Budgets were low, so many of the films are made with simple equipment, often in a studio. While many of the films dealt with the harsh side of reality, they were not without subtle humor. They showed how even in a bleak setting, there was an absurdity that viewers can identify with.

Flashback: A Brief History of Film Chapters 5-8

Flashback: A Brief History of Film Chapters 5-8 Summary and Analysis

As Chapter Five opened, the chief differences between European and American movies from 1912 to 1960 came to the forefront. European movies focused more on artists while Americans focused more on entertainment. In Europe it seemed as if movies were made to embolden man, not necessarily to make money. However American movies both emboldened man and made money. The entertaining films held so much appeal that America earned 40% of its gross profits abroad, half of that in Great Britain alone.

The popularity of American films helped structure the Hollywood studio system. Movies were made by committee, focusing on studios, stars, and genres. The 1920s were the beginning of the Golden Age of the Studio, which lasted for 25 years. The Big Five of Paramount, Warner Bros., Fox, MGM, and RKO made over 90% of American films by 1929. The Little Three of Universal, Columbia, and United Artists made the bulk of the remaining. It was the rise of power of the producer who was in charge of script, casting, cameramen, composers, and art designers. Films were made in assembly line where the stories were built upon models proven successful by the general public.

Chapter Five focused on the factors that made the Hollywood studio system so powerful worldwide. As sales rocketed, studios took on Eli Whitney's model of mass production to get films out to the public. The studios observed that the public was willing to pay for formulaic films that were more story-oriented then character oriented. This chapter showed the transition of films and studios in relation to the public. Each studio built up a name for itself specializing in a certain type of production. For example, RKO specialized in musicals during the 1930s while Paramount was noted for sophisticated titles. It was also considered the most European, perhaps because it drew in artists who were interested in emboldening man. Warner Bros. was known for its fast action films.

While the public clamored for a certain type of genre, it also responded well to certain personalities - the film stars. Each studio gathered its own group of stars who were groomed for the part physically and mentally. Stories were written to highlight the special talents of the stars, frequently at a loss to a good storyline.

Chapter Six demonstrated the dramatic effects that talkies had on the American nation as they became increasingly popular. Along with the sound of voice came many changes. The sound of machine guns highlighted the violence in movies, and dialogue heavy with sexual innuendos made some audiences uncomfortable. Studios had invested heavily in the technology of talkies as the Great Depression cast a pall of realism across the nation. Struggling to survive, the studios realized they had to keep entertaining audiences without offending them.

It was the perfect time for the memorable stylists Busby Berkeley and Fred Astaire to come onto the scene with creative camera work and emotionally-charged dance numbers. Other greats such as Mae West and the Marx Brothers helped fill the theaters, this time with humor. Comedy had changed drastically with the innovation of sound. Sites gags were replaced by wise cracks it was filled with cynicism, battles of the sexes, and hypocrisy. Filmmakers struggled between pragmatism and idealism as they brought stories to the masses. This was the time of great directors such as Frank Capra, Ernst Lubitsch, William Wyer, Howard Hanks, and John Ford.

The 1930s were tough on the film industry, according to chapter six. Not only were films suffering the effects of The Great Depression, but the Catholic Church and other censorious groups were threatening to boycott to get rid of sex and violence in films. Producers had to come up with films that not only did not offend viewers but also encouraged them to spend their precious money. They created the Production Code, which had standards so strict that even married couples in movies had separate beds.

As talkies became more popular, so did new genres such as gangster pictures, musicals, and screwball comedy. Tough guy talk and the sound of machine guns electrified audiences. Once censored, gangster movies became more moralistic, musicals lost their bawdy lines, and screwball comedy was cleaned up. The movies that thrived and stood out among the assembly line films were the ones that held a mirror to America. They showed real people in real situations, but also showed hope, a necessary ingredient for the Depression Era.

Chapter Seven focused on the effects of war on the film industry in Europe in the 1930's. It highlighted filmmaking in Germany, Great Britain, and France. Many world-class producers and directors had to leave Germany such as Fritz Lang who was one of the great producers who fled to France or other European countries when Jews were ousted by the Nazi regime. Germany lost the talents of greats such as Max Ophuls, known for his graceful tracking shots. Ophuls went on to make movies in Italy, France, and the United States. The only world-class filmmaker who remained in Germany, Leni Reifenstahl stayed on and created political propaganda for Hitler.

As German film turned toward propaganda, England was having its own struggles with financing films. The country was notoriously fond of the stage over film so filmmakers had a difficult time getting backing. English sociologist John Grierson felt that film could be used as a tool for social reform, and he focused on building a strong documentary unit. As he was doing this, Alexander Korda, an Hungarian émigré to England, was creating films Hollywood style. His film, "The Private Life of Henry VIII," became a worldwide hit, and helped audiences and investors discover the power of British filmmaking.

The only world-class director that emerged from England in the 1930s was Alfred Hitchcock. Influenced by Expressionism from his stay in Germany in the 1920s, Hitchcock tied together images and sound to create suspense movies that used intricate editing techniques to create a sinister atmosphere. Over in France, Jean Cocteau used his passion for literature, poetry, theater, painting, and daily life to create surrealist films.

Jean Renoir, son of the famed Impressionist painter Pierre Auguste Renoir, used an artists' vision to show the flow of life in serene form.

Chapter Seven talks about the way the Great Depression brought about films that showed hope and made people laugh in America. In Europe, it was a different story. The booming war economy helped America's economy out of the depression, but Europe was a country ravaged by war, attempting a death blow to the struggling film industry. As Hitler rose in power, the Jews were banned from the film industry. Movies in Germany lost artistic talent, and movies in Great Britain were hampered by funding. While other countries struggled to make film, France had fewer difficulties. The stereotypical French love of art also extended into filmmaking during the 1930s, making movies more of a success.

Chapter eight focused on the 1940's in America and demonstrated how World War II affected the film industry. Some of the top of a star's joined the war effort, and directors turned away from fiction in favor of war documentaries and political propaganda. Some of the visuals were so true and revealing that they were banned by the War Department.

During this decade, director John Huston became known for spectacular fiction. Drawn to great literature, Huston matched the mood of each book in his films not by copying every scene, but by synthesizing the writer's aesthetic or moral essence. It was in the 1940's that Preston Sturges became known for his high energy satires with his unconventional, bold ideas while Billy Wilder demonstrated that he could be a journalist as well as a filmmaker. Wilder wrote and directed films that studied human characteristics such as sex, greed, and sadism.

Directors continued experimenting with film as Walt Disney pushed the edges of animation and turned it into an art form. His first feature animation film in 1937 was a great success. His animations were sentimental, tapping into human emotions. Orson Welles changed film as he used his experiences in theater to create films with looming figures, theatrical lighting, and formal compositions. He combined the techniques of filmmakers who had gone before him, all in one film.

Chapter Eight brought readers into a decade of black film or film noir and social realism, reflecting the dark mood of society. The war years were good for the film industry in America, proving the adage that hard times are good times for entertainment industry. Two-thirds of America's population attended the movies weekly. It was the heyday until 1947. Then things began to crash.

In 1947, the House un-American Activities Committee began hearings in Hollywood to investigate communists and communist influence. This affected all the members of the Hollywood community as artists went to jail and everyone was interrogated. In 1948, The Big Five suffered as the federal government concluded an antitrust action, resulting in the disbanding of their theater chains.

Adding to the film industries troubles, Britain announced a 75% tax on foreign film earnings and other European countries followed suit, halving foreign revenues. Just

when it seemed like things couldn't get any worse, television emerged in America. This chapter showed how the best of times and the worst of times occur in one decade, foreshadowing how the power and magic of Hollywood would never be the same again. Hollywood no longer had a guaranteed audience.

Flashback: A Brief History of Film Chapters 9-12

Flashback: A Brief History of Film Chapters 9-12 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter Nine, there was a great amount of emphasis on the countries that were not trampled by World War II in Europe. Great Britain stood up to the war machine. Filmmakers continued building the country's documentary library, and fiction films turned to literary and theatrical adaptations such as Laurence Olivier's "Henry V." British film producers were taking great strides toward their goal of crashing the American market with successful prestigious pictures such as the ones directed by David Lean and Carol Reed. Italy's films focused on neorealism or a new reality that showed the strength of the poor and common people.

As Benito Mussolini came into power, one of his goals was to bring back the international prestige of Italian cinema. One of the filmmakers captivated by this new realism portrayed in films was Roberto Rossellini. In true neorealism style, his films focused on common man in a common setting portrayed by common actors. The films had an emphasis on emotions through a documentary style that avoided plotted story lines. Vittorio de Sica was another great producer in the 1940's. He focused on comedies and was a director who worked together with writer Cesare Zavattini, an unofficial spokesperson for neorealism. A third great director of the decade was Luchino Visconti, the Duke of Modrone. He was the most political of all the neorealist directors and the most aesthetic, carefully crafting each scene and using elegant, period costumes.

For the most part, films in the 1940s in Europe were government-sponsored documentaries and propaganda. What fiction films there were, were devoted to sentimental film and escapist fare created to boost public morale. Production materials were donated to the war effort so film production was greatly reduced. As production facilities and theaters were destroyed, some national cinemas miraculously survived, including Great Britain and Italy.

Germany was the most devastated of all the European countries. Most of the film artists left the country during the Holocaust and Nazi censors had to approve every film, ensuring that they carried a positive message. The propaganda films were filled with false messages that advocated the Nazi regime. After the war was over, the initial films attempted to correct the misconceptions about the war. France, also affected by the war, produced a few films, mostly from independents. As the German forces moved in, the filmmakers left in the country concentrated on fantasy films.

After the war, the French struggled with finances, building space, and old equipment. The government taxed the movies, making it more difficult for the film industry to

survive, and American movies took over the market, nearly wiping out the French film industry. The Soviet Union focused on documentaries, and Josef Stalin ordered film studios to focus on Russian nationalism and unity, highlighting the heroes of Mother Russia. After the war, filmmakers focused on biographies of Soviet public figures, science, and art such as the opera, ballet, and theater.

Chapter 10 highlighted film in America in the 1950s. Television had a major impact on the film industry in this decade, and by the end of 1950, over 85% of all the US homes had a television set. Most of the "family audience" drifted to TV, leaving theaters open for specialized markets. There was an interesting struggle for power after the studios lost their theaters because independent filmmakers were willing to take risks, and the studios had to compete for screen time. It was a good era for the independents.

Studios were on the decline because they did not factor in America's changing tastes as Americans were ready to leave fluffy story-lines behind in favor or more sophisticated films, and because they wanted to shoot on location rather than in their studios, which put them over budget. European movies were increasing in popularity in America, further dampening the American filmmaking industry. The European movies appealed to audiences who were looking for more sophisticated films. To gain more of an audience, the studios started experimenting with the size of their screens. They worked with three-dimensional films, Cinerama, and CinemaScope. The studios experimented with different screen ratios, and eventually settled on the new standard of 1.85 to 1, which was still used in the early 2000's for films not photographed using an anamorphic process.

Chapter 10 showed that the 1950's were a political time in the movie world. The communist hysteria continued, ravaging the good-will on set as artists were interrogated. The war increased an interest in social realism for filmmakers. They were ready to make serious stories highlighting social themes based on contemporary problems and filled with excitement, drama, and suspense. In 1956, the Production Code was revised. Films now allowed kidnapping, prostitution, drugs, and abortion. Method acting became popular. Rather than working with "correct body positions," actors focused on the inner spirit of the character they were portraying bringing out intense emotions in a character in word and deed. This chapter highlighted three major producers of the decade: Fred Zinnemann, Elia Kazan, and Alfred Hitchcock, who was now working in America.

Chapter 11 covered international cinema in the 1950s. During the 1950s, the Japanese cinema emerged as a great international force while the British cinema started to decline. This was the Japanese Golden age in film as Akira Kurosawa, Kenji Mizoguchi, Yasujiro Ozu, and other filmmakers won hundreds of prizes at international festivals. The most popular genres were science fiction, animation, and samurai films.

Rather than a becoming a decade known for a particular film movement, this was the decade of great individual filmmakers. Japanese films managed to thrive even during the harshest years of the war, in part because they were traditionally conservative, and

thereby unaffected by government scrutiny. The Japanese filmmakers focused on family film and period dramas.

The chapter focused on Japan mostly, but also briefly touched on Sweden, Italy, and France. Sweden boasted the talented Ingmar Bergman; Italy's Federico Fellini wowed the world with his movies, and France came back to life with the New Wave at the end of a mediocre decade. It was during this decade in France that Robert Bresson shone through with his stark films, and Jacu Tati brought the bright light of comic relief into a dark era.

Chapter 11 somewhat blindsided a reader with its focus on Japan, a country only vaguely mentioned prior to this chapter. In this chapter it's discovered that not only was Japan strong in film, but it was actually one of the strongest film markets globally. It produced large quantities of film using production techniques from Hollywood and used the United States model for studios. While the title of the chapter implied that it covered the 1950's, it offered the overall history of Japanese film, and foreshadowed the strength it was going to have in the future of film. Other European countries were tagged on to the chapter almost as an afterthought.

In the beginning of the decade of the 1960s, according to Chapter 12, Hollywood movies highlighted glamor. By the end of the decade, social revolution radically changed the industry. The studios invested money they did not have on expensive spectacle pictures that were lavishly produced. They cut back on the amount of movies they made, but spent more on the ones that they had in process.

Most of the great films produced during this decade came from Britain. Other movies were made internationally in England, Spain, Italy, and to what was then Yugoslavia. As the American studios floundered, commercial conglomerates came to the rescue. These conglomerates were associated with companies such as TV production companies, music, and publishing, bringing about packaged multi-industry products.

As the decade came to a close, the Vietnam War shifted the mood of the nation. Americans were getting angry and critical of the establishments. They were experimenting with drugs and enjoying the sexual movement. It was a time dominated by youth, and new movies often included rock music soundtracks that fueled anti-establishment sentiments.

Independent filmmakers reflected the strife in the nation in a personal film style similar to France's New Wave, and the Production Code became a piece of history in 1968 as the rating system took over. Recording equipment and usage changed through innovations such as the one Fouad Said used. He developed a virtual movie studio on wheels called the Cinemobile Mark IV. It had room for actors and crews and included dressing rooms, a bathroom, and all the necessary film making equipment for making movies on location. These innovations increased the popularity of film towards the end of the decade, and American cinema attendance was once again on the rise.

Flashback: A Brief History of Film Chapters 13-16

Flashback: A Brief History of Film Chapters 13-16 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 13 focused on European cinema from the beginning of the 1960s until the end of the decade. Europe was brimming with talent, taking over the international market. It was the era of New Wave filmmakers in France. Pushing aside light fare, these filmmakers favored intellectual films. Filmmakers took advantage of emerging technology and created films quickly with lightweight, portable equipment. They experimented with genres, mixing comedy with serious scenes, including violence and comedy. The New Wave filmmakers favored loose plots that encouraged improvisation. The 1960s were considered the Golden Age in Great Britain.

There were two different phases in this era. They were the Angry Young Man movement, a.k.a. "Kitchen Sink sink" realism from 1958 to 1963 and the Swinging England period from 1963-1970. The earlier part of the decade focused on films in black-and-white and dealt with pessimistic topics. The second part of the decade had a more New Wave feel and used colors.

Cinema in Italy also thrived during the 1960s, and filmmakers in Eastern Europe were granted more freedom than ever before. Yugoslavia was known for its animation, and the Soviet Union portrayed realistic studies of Soviet life. The most important movies from the USSR in the 1960s were adaptations of literary classics and period films. In Czechoslovakia, there was a cultural movement that came to be known as Prague Spring. Filmmakers made low-budget movies that were experimental, poignant, and understated. In 1968, the Soviet Union replaced the Czechoslovakian government with the Soviet regime, wiping out the film culture. Many the artists left to go west.

Chapter 14 covered cinema in the 1970s in America. This decade could be split into two very distinct areas, with the earlier era emphasizing violence, sexual complex, racism, and moral bankruptcy in public institutions. It was the first time in history that an American film focused on negative, pessimistic themes. In the early 70s, the blaxploitation pictures became popular, reflecting a new era of black militancy. The nation was facing Vietnam war and Watergate, and political films reflected a distrust of the government.

Although this seemed negative, the American movie theater was beginning to have a revival. This was the first time in 20 years that movie attendance was rising rather than decreasing. American film became dominant on the international market once again.

Filmmakers focused on characters more than plot for the most part. With censorship out of the way, porn films were on the rise, and the United States had hundreds of theaters

for the genre. Romanticism was put on the back shelf. The feminist movement made its way to the screen, and by 1977, four out of five of the best picture nominees were filmed mainly with women.

As the decade came to a close, the Vietnam War ended, and film viewers were looking for more light and darkness. It was another time of transition where audiences were returning to traditional values. Filmmakers started showing more style in the film, influenced by the New Wave movement. There was more emphasis on attending a film that ever before in America. Some of the filmmakers came from scriptwriting and television while others were actors turned producers, and still others came from Europe. By 1975, there was a huge increase in film course offerings at colleges and universities across the country.

Chapter 15 began with the statement that the period of the 1970s was characterized by national movements and "isms" such as feminism, nationalism, and Marxism. It was also a time of liberation movements from Black liberation to gay liberation to women's liberation. Women filmmakers such as Diane Kurys and Lina Wertmuller came to the forefront, and communist bloc countries lightened up their restrictions for filmmakers.

In Great Britain, cinema was on the decline. The best works were appearing on TV rather than in movie theaters. There were some bright spots in the tough decade, however, as James Bond movies and The Monty Python Flying Circus troupe hit the big screen. France was also struggling during this decade. Its only outstanding films during the decade were "La Cage aux Folles" and its sequel.

In West Germany, films were frequently political and addressed issues such as the Nazi era and the forgotten people. Other filmmakers followed the American pop-culture movement, focusing on American styled movies and rock and roll. In the French New Wave tradition, filmmakers created low-budget films with small crews. The final product frequently looked like home movies, and eschewed plot in favor of mood. This type of film was very popular in France, Great Britain, and the United States.

Italy's contribution to the decade were filmmakers Bernardo Bertolucci and Lena Wertmuller, who both made films based on sex and politics. Over in Eastern Europe, filmmakers were given more freedom than in their Stalinist past. They focused on period films and literary adaptations, generally avoiding politics.

In 1971, Australia suddenly emerged as a world-class film producing nation. The emergence was mostly due to the creation of the Australian Film Commission. This agency, subsidized by the government, offered producers promotional campaigns, tax incentives, and other benefits. The most popular movies of this decade were period films. As Austrailia flourished, the Third World floundered. In Latin America, Africa, and Asia, filmmakers struggled through financial hardships and government oppression to use their art as a tool for social change. In what came to be known as The Third Cinema theater realism, Third World country filmmakers created films that exposed the injustices of the real world.

According to Chapter 16, American filmmaking in the 1980s consisted of financial gains and aesthetic contraction. Mainstream Hollywood films centered on family solidarity, winning, nationalism, money, and militarism. Technology exploded in the 1980s beginning with the advent of the videocassettes and following through with the mixing of live action and animation such as in the film "Who Framed Roger Rabbit." Filmmakers began filming with a small screen in mind, using increasingly utilitarian camerawork. The studio system regained its strength, and the Independents found themselves pushed aside. Business was the name of the game, and the studios began buying theater chains once again. This led to an increased number of mediocre films on the market. The studios packaged movies and stars according to public demand and marketed them aggressively. The American public wanted films about the military and movies about the lives of the rich. It was a decade for big money and heavy spending. Many of the best movies were made by veteran filmmakers. After the stock market crash in 1987, film investment declined in America. Foreign investors came to the rescue and were a solid part of the American studio equation by the end of the decade.

Flashback: A Brief History of Film Chapters 17-20

Flashback: A Brief History of Film Chapters 17-20 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 17 opened with the statement that while the British film industry had a resurgence, there were no great new movements in international cinema during the 1980s. While the other countries were struggling, Great Britain was having a renaissance as it blended old and new cinema. British filmmakers continued making films from old literary scripts, using craftsmanship honed through the decades, as they stuck to class consciousness. They also began focusing on the recent past, particularly the 1950s. Another popular topic was addressing themes related to sex. James Ivory, Bill Forsyth, and Stephen Frears established themselves as significant directors of the decade. There was more concentration on television and theater than in the actual film industry.

During this decade in Western Europe, Pedro Almodovar, a filmmaker who was considered by some to be Spain's poet laureate, emerged as a filmmaker who loved to shock the bourgeoisie. The French produced a few international successes during the 1980s. "Diva" was a love story and thriller that next styles from chase scenes to lyrical traveling shots. "Shoa" was a documentary that dealt with the Holocaust, and two other successful French movies in the 1980s were adaptations of "The Water of the Hills" by Marcel Bagnol, directed by Claude Berri.

In West Germany, the cinema mourned the death of Fassbinder and movies in the 1980s were lighter than in past decades. The Soviet Union, Hungary, and Poland rose in cinematic power during the 1980s. Breaking away from the politically strangled films of the past, filmmakers were encouraged to create commercial films filled with light entertainment. After 1985, filmmakers enjoyed a new freedom, creating a "New Model." The Polish cinema in the 1980s used the medium to stand up to the government, and the Hungarian film industry used film to preach about moral issues.

In the Third World, filmmakers continued to struggle with costs and materials. They also had to deal with language issues, often dubbing films so foreigners could understand the dialect in a movie could they could reach a wider audience. The films also had to work their way through political structures where scripts had to be approved by government. Japan was also suffering from a decline in Japanese cinema as viewers left theaters to watch television and video. On the positive side, there was an increased internationalism of movie audiences. There was also an increase in demand for comic films, which comic humorist Juzo Itami, a Japanese filmmaker who emerged in the 1980s, excelled in.

Addressing the 1990s in America, Chapter 18 focused on the fact that the American motion picture industry did not have any economic competition. It wasn't necessarily financially viable either. Films cost more to make between technology costs and the cost of paying megastars. Studios addressed this issue by making fewer films and creating films to please the public rather than ones made for art. Studios co-produced films, reducing the risk of going bankrupt if a film wasn't a success.

Filmmakers in the past got their inspiration and talent from literature and live theater. In the 1990s, they came from MTV and television. Film schools in America increased in popularity, but this didn't benefit the writing that came to the screen during the decade. Filmmakers began filming with the TV screen in mind, losing the creativity that came from large movements and crane shots in favor of close-up shots that would show a story better on a TV screen.

On the bright side, there was a plethora of superlatives actors, and animation techniques grew more impressive with changing technology. Computer graphics imaging or CGI brought a bright plastic sheen to animation. It was also a time of breaking down bias and stereotypes. Gays are no longer shunned, and woman were treated as equals in the industry. Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese continued their reign through the 1990s as did Woody Allen and Clint Eastwood, who showed vulnerability in his filmmaking in the 1990s. It was in this decade that Independent cinema emerged as a source of artistic cinematic achievement. Independent filmmakers such as Quentin Tarantino, Joel and Ethan Coen, Cameron Crowe, Whit Stillman, Todd Solondz, Paul Thomas Anderson, and Victor Nunez showed film critics that their films were as appealing as the studio films.

In the 1990s, American film dominated the international markets according to Chapter 19. American movies accounted for approximately 85% of the European box office revenues while European movies only made up one percent of American box office revenues. American studios founded new theaters in European countries, favoring American music movies on the bill. After 1991, European companies address this issue by co-producing films. Some critics thought this was a sellout, while others felt it was their only choice for survival. Filmmakers began to make films in whichever country they could find financing.

Asia and Latin America found success by catering to their native audiences, and India maintained its status of prolific filmmaking, although its films rarely found favor with international audiences. The 1990s in Europe were particularly good for the Irish and the British, perhaps because their films were in English, a dominant language in commerce, Internet, and diplomacy. Great Britain continued wowing the world with its Masterpiece Theatre, and filmmakers showed their diversity as they took on other genres such as Mike Newell's gritty gangster film "Donnie Brasco."

In Ireland, filmmakers produced a wide range of genres, but the country's most important movies focused on Northern Ireland's conflicts between the independent Republic of Ireland and the Protestant state in northeast island as well as the Irish paramilitary organization, the Irish Republican Army. There was an economic boom that

contributed to the sudden increase in world-class films in Ireland in the 1990s. Irish film producers were frequently financed from abroad, using actors from other countries. What made the films unique, were the powerful screenplays which originated with Irish writers.

In continental Europe, cinema was struggling in the 1990s. France did slightly better than the other countries because of the country's quota system, but hardly any of the movies produced made it to an international audience. In the People's Republic of China, film was still being monitored by the Chinese government. Australia did moderately well internationally, although many of its most talented filmmakers worked in Hollywood.

In the new millennium, according to chapter 20, two important film movements emerged: the poetic realistic cinema of Iran and the film a boom in Latin America. In Europe, there was not a specific movement, although certain movies such as "Billy Elliot," "The Pianist," and "Amelie" to name a few and filmmakers such as Gurinda Chada, Mira Nair, and Jonathan Glazer came to the forefront. Film industries in Eastern Europe continued to struggle with its states-subsidized industries after the fall of communism. Its great international hit was "No Man's Land," a black comedy.

Islamic cinema began reaching a worldwide audience with its new cinema. The leaders, primarily in Egypt, Turkey, and Iran include: Abbas Kiarostami, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Janfar Panahi, Youssef Chahine and Yilmaz Guney. Filmmakers risked punishment as extreme as jailing by addressing serious issues such as female repression in film. If governmental and religious censors deemed a film unacceptable, they withheld financing or even banned a film.

In Hong Kong, Asian martial arts movies continued to garner an international audience, particularly with Ang Lee's "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" and John Woo's "Face/Off." In Latin America, Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil entered the new millennium with a film boom. This was largely due to the democratically elected governments. Rather than creating films that were political and dull, the new cinema focused on funny, intellectual, raunchy, and sexy films that entertained international audiences.

In the United States, independent cinema was coming to power. The big studios weren't producing major blockbusters, partially due to the rising costs of creating a film. Changes in technology and the marketplace changed the economic balance of the movie industry. A majority of Hollywood's profit came from DVDs. Instead of theater and literary works becoming a model for film, the new millennium focused on comic books and video games as models. Digital photography overtook the 35mm camera, cutting down editing time but also lessening the quality of the final product.

Characters

Thomas Edison

Thomas Edison lived in East Orange, New Jersey. In the late 1800s, he was working on his favorite invention called the phonograph. When he heard about Pierre Meissonier's Zoetrope, he assigned his 24-year-old assistant named William Dixon with the task of creating a machine that would act as a visual complement to his phonograph.

Together they created a prototype for the picture machine, but could not come up with the correct material for the pictures to be displayed on. After two years, Edison heard about the flexible film base that was covered with photographic emulsion designed by George Eastman. After Edison purchased a sample, he realized that they had found the solution to their dilemma. They made a working machine.

Although Edison invented the movie machine, he did not feel that motion pictures would attract much public attention so he designed a machine where only one person could see a film at a time. It was called the Kinetoscope. After designing it, Edison moved on to other projects.

In 1893, Norman Raff heard about the Kinetoscope and initiated a partnership with Edison. This partnership led to the opening of the first Kinetoscope parlor initiated 1894. It was an immediate success. Initially, the public would pay 25 cents to pass down a row of machines while attendants switched on the machines. Edison tweaked the machines so they each had a nickel-in-a -slot attachment that lowered the initial overhead and increased profits.

David Wark Griffith

David Wark Griffith was considered to be "Cinema's first genius." Griffith came onto the scene in 1907 as a theater actor working for Biograph Company and the American Mutoscope. In addition to acting, he sold them some stories and asked if he could try directing. Griffith released his first film in 1908. As he directed two films a week, he began experimenting with lighting, cameras, and scenes. He intensified onscreen emotions by using camera angles and props to add to the stories. Griffith tapped into the essence of a character through authentic costumes and by hiring actors who could portray true, realistic human emotions.

Griffith eventually left Biograph to join Mutual, where he had the opportunity to make a longer film. He created "The Birth of a Nation," a three-hour film that stunned movie audiences in 1915. These audiences had never seen anything like it before. While controversial because of its racial bias, the film offered a stunning panoramic history of the Civil War and its aftermath. It was Griffith's greatest success. He continued making films, some better than others. Some were failures because they came out at the wrong time in history. By the mid-1930's, he had fallen in status and some gave him the name

of Last Victorian. His gift to the movie industry was proof that film could make money. It could create worlds and capture the human soul. He connected viewers to characters onscreen.

Edwin S. Porter

Edwin S. Porter was a jack-of-all-trades-cameraman that worked in Edison's studio. During this era, this also meant that he was the director. In 1903, his film "The Great Train Robbery" showed his experimentation with editing. The single reel held humor, action, violence, hand-tinting, special effects, and a full-screen close-up of the villain shooting towards the audience. While this seems normal by today's standards, the techniques made Porter the leading filmmaker in his day.

He had an instinctive talent for telling a story visually. He focused more on the plot of the film than on the people in it. As the cinema changed into a medium where character development was more important than plot, Porter retired from directing and work at the Simplex projector company, working on machines and inventing new machines that he felt comfortable with.

Charlie Chaplin

Charles Spencer Chaplin (1889 to 1977) was an influential screenwriter, producer, and director. When he was 24, he was a popular performer mostly known for portraying an obnoxious drunk. This is a role he pulls from his real life, since his father died from drinking when he was only 52 years old. Charlie's mother was insane, so he and his half-brother Sydney spent much of their childhood living in London's streets. For a while, they lived in an orphanage. Chaplin always felt a sense of helplessness and deprivation, which influenced his filmmaking career.

Sydney was the first brother to break into show business, and he promoted Charlie who became part of a vaudeville troupe at a young age. after achieving success on the stage, he joined Keystone and made a series of comedies. In 1915, Charlie joined Bronco Billy Essanay company. After making 15 films with them, he signed with Mutual.

Although he was known for his comedic timing and comedic stunts, Charlie never lost touch with the emotional basis of humanity. He knew what life was about, and pulled comedy out of harsh, realistic situations. He wrote the psychological drama, "A Woman of Paris." Charlie knew how to use storytelling and camera angles to tell poignant tales. Charlie Chaplin influenced filmmaking and audiences for many generations with his ability to mix reality and comedy in a manner that touched the hearts of film viewers.

Mary Pickford

Mary Pickford (1893 to 1979) had a career that paralleled movies as they evolved. When she was a teenager, she worked for Biograph. A decade later, she made half a

million dollars a year, owned her own studio, and helped form the United Artists. She was best known for her roles based on Victorian literature where she brought a Madonna-like sweetness to her characters.

Orson Welles

Orson Welles (1915 to 1985) was a famous actor before he ever began making films. He was known for his breathy peace voice by 1934, and stunned the world in his performance of "The War of the Worlds" in a radio broadcast that panicked America, which thought it was getting invaded by aliens. His notoriety gave him carte blanche in Hollywood, where he created "Citizen Kane." The film stunned the public with its editing, sophistication, vivacity, and air of command.

Alfred Hitchcock

Alfred Hitchcock was a famous filmmaker in London. He moved to America in 1939. His greatest period was the 1950s where he proved himself as a strong artistic and commercial filmmaker who knew how to please an audience with his thrillers. One of his greatest strengths is the fact that he was always aware of his audience. He was a brilliant marketer who made sure the audience knew his name as well as the name of his movies.

Rainer Werner Fassbinder

Rainer Werner Fassbinder was considered the leading filmmaker in the west German movements. Extremely prolific, he created over 40 movies in 14 years. He performed in his own works as an actor and was a writer-director for television, live theater, and radio. His films show some Hollywood influence, and he created gangster films, screwball comedies, film noir, classical literature adaptations, westerns, and science fiction. Outsiders searching for acceptance were a main focus in his films. He highlighted love relationships and politics. The film that made him an international wonder was "Ali: Fear Eats the Soul."

Martin Scorsese

Martin Scorsese was notorious for his rock documentaries, especially "Woodstock." He grew up in an Italian-American ghetto in New York City and some of the violence he saw is reflected in his films. He artfully controlled camera movement and angles to establish a move, while intercutting shots for dramatic effect. He encouraged actors to improvise and he shot excessive footage to get the scenes he wanted.

Jean-Luc Godard

Jean-Luc Godard was considered the most radical innovator of the New Wave filmmakers in the 1960s. He was extremely prolific, making two movies a year during the 1960s. Always pushing the parameter of film art, his fans were highbrow critics and intellectuals. He would work without a script, having actors improvise as they went along. Some of his films were plot-less and he described these films as "essays." His goal was to get ideas across rather than a specific story. Goddard was firmly against American cinema and he turned political by the end of the 1960s.

Fred Zinnemann

Fred Zinnemann was a postwar realist whose films challenged an individual's identity. His films introduced the most famous of the Method actors such as Montgomery Clift, Marlon Brando, and Julie Harris to name a few.

Akira Kirosawa

Akira Kirosawa, also known as "The Emperor" in Japanese film circles was known for his artistic talent as well as his uncompromising standards. He treated noblemen and beggars equally, focusing on human emotions in his films. He had a brisk editing style filled with split-second shots, and was a master of the widescreen. He used cinematic sound to enhance an image, not just add to it. Kirosawa's films also paid attention to the exploited female population.

Kenji Mizoguchi

Kenji Mizoguchi made many movies between 1922 and World War II when he fell out of the public's favor. He won the Silver Lion prize at the Venice film Festival in 1953, and he was back in the public's favor once again. He used traditional story material to create universal truths using fluid camera movements and lengthy takes.

Yasujiro Ozu

Yasujiro Ozu was particularly noted for his attention to minutiae. His characters were average, hard-working people devoted to family life. He was more interested in character than plot and focused specifically on family life. His style embodied Buddhist ideals such as restraint, simplicity, and serenity. Ozu believed in the "less is more" concept, in character dialogue as well as on set and even his editing was sparce.

Ingmar Bergman

Considered to be Sweden's greatest filmmaker, Ingmar Bergman explores metaphysical themes. He became an international success in 1955 with a period comedy, his only comedy. His films dealt brilliantly with psychological upheaval addressing issues such as fears, sexuality, anger, and death.

Federico Fellini

Federico Fellini was at Italy's most famous filmmaker. His films explored human emotions, stressing moods and feelings. He was part of the neorealist movement, shooting films on location using outcasts of society as his main characters.

Sidney Lumet

Sidney Lumet was a former television producer who turned to filmmaking. He was extremely prolific, making more than one movie per year in the 1960s. He had a good rapport with actors As he made serious movies, and was known for his ability to bring out emotional intensity in these actors. Historians divide his work into three broad categories. They are literary and theatrical adaptations of prestigious properties, projects for profit and enjoyment, and social dramas, mostly taking place in New York City. The social dramas were his greatest strength.

John Frankenheimer

John Frankenheimer was a popular New York television director in the 1950s who became a well-known film director in the 1960s. He was extremely prolific, working with a variety of themes, genres, spent styles. He had an instinct for directing techniques that heightens performances in literary works. Frankenheimer was drawn to films that were pessimistic.

John Cassavetes

John Cassavetes was a famous character actor of the 1960s, known for his villainous roles. He also created award-winning offbeat movies that he shot with simple equipment and low budgets.

Arthur Penn

Arthur Penn was a former New York stage director and television director best known for "Bonnie and Clyde." The film marks a shift in America's viewing habits in the 1960s. The violent comedy created controversy. Penn followed this film with the gentle story of "Alice's Restaurant."

Sam Peckinpah

Sam Peckinpah was a controversial director in the 1960s. His violent films brought new dimension to classic Westerns. He was criticized for romanticizing violence and glorifying it. His heroes were bad guys that just were not as bad as the rest, and women were sex objects. He was considered a superlative stylist, adding slow motion to violent scenes, capturing the energy and motion in violence.

Stanley Kubrick

Stanley Kubrick was the most important American filmmaker to emerge during the 1960s. The still photographer and independent filmmaker worked on genre films based on actual events. He moved to Great Britain in 1961 after his movie, "Spartacus" became a huge success, but he still considered himself an American artist. He was financed through American studios. Kubrick approached controversial topics head on, from the sexually obsessed Lolita to his satire of nuclear follies in Dr. Strangelove and violence in "A Clockwork Orange." He created visual experiences using special effects, encouraging viewers to reach out with their minds as shown in "2001: A Space Odyssey."

Francois Truffaut

Francois Truffaut was considered the dean of French filmmakers in the 1960s. He created movie masterpieces where he combined techniques from Jean Renoir and Alfred Hitchcock. Truffaut favored unexpected details that showed human vulnerability. He was more inspired by feeling and emotion than ideas. Truffaut proved that he was also a sensitive director of children, which he showed in his film "The 400 Blows."

Alain Resnais

Alain Resnais created movies that were not typical of the New Wave movement. His films dealt with time and memory, exploring subject matter such as concentration camps in Hiroshima. His scripts were tightly written and his films planned in advance, right down to the last detail. The screenplays he used were written by respected literary figures of the time.

Karel Reisz

Karel Reisz popularized Kitchen Sink realism with his film, "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning." His stories were violent and cynical, yet showed surprising tenderness.

Michelangelo Antonioni

Michelangelo Antonioni was a prominent movie maker in 1960s Italy. A former film critic, Antonioni became known internationally and was favored among intellectual critics for his modernist solemnity. He explored the depth of human psyche rather than focusing on plot and storyline.

Miklos Jancso

Miklos Jancso was a Hungarian filmmaker noted for his choreography and technical genius. His movies focused on military engagements, emphasizing humiliation and violence.

Robert Altman

Robert Altman was a television director who made it big in filming with his smash hit "M*A*S*H." He concentrated on characterization, documentary-like visuals, overlapping dialogue, and pessimistic views of human conditions interlaced with comedy. He explores characters that are in transition. Relying heavily on improvisation, Altman enjoyed the experience of creating a film likening it to jazz, which is not planned. Rather, he counted on cameras to capture a film.

Francis Ford Coppola

Francis Ford Coppola was considered the most prestigious film maker of the 1970s. He was known for his artistic daring, and he was notoriously over budget. He first hurt his credibility as a writer, then went on to direct "The Godfather." His painstaking attention to detail garnered rave reviews, and the film won the Best Picture picture Oscar. In "The Godfather, Part Two," Coppola wowed audiences by adding vicious and death to the first story while expanding its political implications.

Roman Polanski

Roman Polanski was the most famous Polish filmmaker in the 1960s. He concentrated on psychological thrillers.

Woody Allen

Woody Allen was a writer In the 1950s for a famous comedy television show entitled "Your Show of Shows." In the 60s, he was a standup comedian in New York City. After succeeding as a performer, he turned to the Broadway stage, and two of his comedies were turned into movies. In 1969, he directed his own movie, "Take the Money and Run." His New York Jewish style emphasized ethnic clichés. The humor was directed at

one's self. Allen was very prolific, averaging a movie a year in addition to humorous essays and several plays.

Steven Spielberg

Steven Spielberg knew he wanted to be a filmmaker from a very young age. After graduating from college, he directed episodes of different television series and moved his way up to directing made-for-TV movies. One of these films, "Duel," was released theatrically in Europe were to achieve great success. In America he became famous for "Jaws," "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," "Raiders of the Lost Ark," and "E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial."

Ken Russell

Ken Russell was a British director who was popular in the 1970s. He was very controversial in his depiction of famous composers through biography films made for television. The press called him self-indulgent and a sensationalist. The same was said for his feature films such as "Women in Love." Russell was known for pushing the edges of controversial sexuality in his subject matter.

Werner Herzog

Werner Herzog created films have focused on the human condition in broad metaphysical terms. Popular in the 1970s, The New German Cinema filmmaker was known for what he placed in front of a camera. He used exotic settings ranging from the Amazon to the mountains of Peru.

Objects/Places

East Orange, New Jersey

This is where Thomas Edison worked with William Dickson, ultimately creating the Kinetoscope.

Rochester, New York

Rochester, New York is the place where George Eastman devised the film base that made the Kinetoscope a viable moving picture machine.

United States

The United States was a major force in international film. It is the home of Hollywood, California, which is the center for moviemaking and known internationally.

France

This is a country known for producers who concentrated on cinema as an art form. It was France that came out with New Wave cinematography.

Great Britain

Great Britain is a major force in international film. It's best known for its documentaries, period film, and movies based on theatrical presentations.

Germany

This country offered many talented producers and filmmakers to the world. It's role in World War II had a dramatic negative effect on the film industry in Europe.

USSR

The USSR has a rich history in filmmaking, first with political propaganda, then with documentaries that showed life as it was.

Japan

Japan was known for its conservative films, animation, and Samurai films.

Latin America

This third-world country struggled through decades of repression, financial difficulties, and governmental censoring to emerge as a country that provided the world with poignant films that showed life in its true form.

Australia

Australia is a major player in the international filmmaking arena. Filmmakers receive support from the government, giving them the opportunity to explore film more than other countries can.

Themes

Filmmaking Over a Century

Time has made a huge impact on the film industry and this book uses the progression of time to tell its tale. It began with a look back through the ages, showing how film might have always been part of time. It then highlighted a couple of people of import and a few inventions that propelled moving pictures forward. It showed how these people and inventions affected a few more people who made a few more inventions and innovations. New producers and filmmakers built on the past in story lines and film techniques. Sometimes time was good for the film industry, and sometimes it had a devastating effect. The book broke time into specific segments, detailing the changes in the filmmaking industry decade by decade, both in the United States and internationally.

The book highlighted filmmakers who stood the test of time, with careers spanning many decades as they entertained the public in new, exciting, and often thought-provoking ways. It also highlighted talented filmmakers who were just a flash in the pan, making a significant mark via film, then disappearing into a creative abyss. Sometimes brilliant creators never went further than a few successful films because their own time was tragically cut short. The book ends with a projection of time yet to come as it looks at where film might be headed in the future.

People and Filmmaking

Different people had different talents, different dreams, and different ideas that helped the film industry become what it is today. This book began by highlighting a man who kept a journal in the 1600's and wrote about a device that projected images on a wall. It then jumped ahead a few centuries to the end of the 1800's where it highlighted inventors who made moving pictures possible with their machinery. Chapter by chapter, the book highlighted individuals who made a significant impact on film. At first it focused on inventors. Later it highlighted producers, directors, and actors.

Decade by decade, first in America then internationally, the book highlighted individuals who made it big during their era. It delved into the backgrounds of the individuals, letting the reader know how their life situations and mentors impacted the way they dealt with film. It showed how people could rise in popularity in one decade, disappear for another, then rise again. It demonstrated career shifts as actors became directors with a new vision of how to push film to the limits of what they knew. It also showed how some people influenced each other and learned from each other to bring creativity to new heights while others just seemed to have an instinct for progressive filmmaking.

Politics and Filmmaking

Politics played a heavy hand in the film industry, as shown in this book. Right from its inception, the film industry was riddled with political maneuvers. As film became popular, the Patents Company attempted to take control by making theaters pay for the rights to use their films, and they tried to charge anyone who used their equipment. Some filmmakers tried to flee from their bondage by going as far west from the lawyers in New York as possible. This was the beginning of Hollywood in California.

In Europe, warfare had a big impact on filmmaking. Geniuses scrambled to leave Germany before they were annihilated, theaters were bombed, and filmmakers lacked funding in struggling, war-ridden economies. Much creativity was lost in filmmaking as governments insisted on censoring films. The governments wanted to use film for the own devices, forcing filmmakers to create propaganda. The political tension in Europe during World War II even affected America. Actors and directors were interrogated to ascertain whether or not they had ties to the communist regime.

Film conglomerates vied for the power of the market. There were several times when the studios rose and fell in power. When the American markets crashed, investors from overseas began to wield their power.

Style

Perspective

"Flashback: A Brief History of Film" is written by Louis Giannetti and Scott Eyman. Giannetti is a Professor Emeritus of English and film at Case Western Reserve University. He was a professional film critic who had written for different scholarly journals about movies in addition to teaching courses on film among other courses. Giannetti had written several books about cinema. Eyman was an award winning writer who has written several books about film, actors, and Hollywood. He also wrote for television.

The two authors approached this book as an eclectic collection of historical landmarks marking the history of film. While serious about the subject, they attempted to explain the history of film in layman's terms. The book overflowed with passion for film in general, although it did attempt to remain objective. The authors' primary concern was to write about the history of film focusing on the art more than industry.The third person writing they used kept the information objective, and at times the book almost seemed encyclopedic as it covered the artists' lives. The authors covered some of the great film creators in history in great detail and offered a casual mention of others.

The book focused mainly on American film history, although it did also address international film history. The authors stated that they did this because they were writing for a primarily American audience. In the chapters that covered international film history a reader gets the sense that it was written from an American perspective.

Tone

The tone of this book is very objective, giving a reader no idea of authors' preferences aside from content chosen. The authors addressed good points of film history as well as bad points, mostly backed up with solid evidence from box office sales or reviews. They didn't hesitate to call a film failure if that is the truth. The way it was a written helps a reader connect not only with film history, but with world history in general. It highlighted the important parts of each decade, and showed how the events that happened in the decade made an impact on film creation and cinema attendance.

Readers might feel of lightness in tone when times are good, and feel the seriousness of the situation when the book addressed war and poverty. This was particularly true when the authors discussed Third World countries and the oppression that filmmakers had to face when making their art. Pieces of the history of film were put together in an academic tone without ever feeling too heavy or too light. New words and concepts were introduced within context so readers could easily understand what the authors were talking about.

Structure

This book was comprised of 20 chapters, each between 25 and 30 pages long on average. The first few chapters focused on the origins of moving pictures and famous people associated with that. By chapter three, the chapters were labeled by decade. Every other chapter covers American cinema for a particular decade, and the alternating chapters cover European and other international cinema for the same decade.

At the beginning of each chapter, there was a time line of important historical events that occurred on the continent. This was followed by a brief recap and synopsis of the film industry in that area. The chapters then discussed new movements and significant occurrences that occurred in film during the decade. It highlighted prominent talent, defining how the individuals influenced the world of film. Each chapter closed with biographies of famous filmmakers and actors, highlighting famous titles of films from the decade.

The final chapter of the book covered global cinema since the year 2000. It addressed the cinema in Europe, Islamic cinema, cinema in Hong Kong and China, and cinema in the United States. It addressed where the Hollywood studios stood in the 21st century, and talked about technology and the marketplace using a global outlook. The chapter took a look at major figures and trends before highlighting emerging artists as it came to a close.

Quotes

"The cinema? Three cheers for darkened rooms" (Preface, Flashback: A Brief History of Film, pg. ix.)

"It was Langolois's contention that, like the continent of North America before Columbus, which geographers knew had to be there, the movies always existed; they were just waiting to be invented" (Chapter 1, Flashback: A Brief History of Film, pg. 4.)

"Movies could now go anywhere the human mind could conceive" (Chapter 2, Flashback: A Brief History of Film, pg. 31.)

"Without enthusiasm, there is no cinema, there are no films, there is nothing. There must be enthusiasm and it must be communicated like a flame - the cinema is a flame in the shadows. If one does not feel it, one cannot transmit it" (Chapter 2, Flashback: A Brief History of Film, pg. 76.)

"Movies could now go anywhere the human mind could conceive" (Chapter 2, Flashback: A Brief History of Film, pg. 31.)

"A film is a ribbon of dreams. The camera is much more than a recording apparatus, it is a medium via which messages reach us from another world that is not ours and that brings us to the heart of a great secret. Here magic begins" (Chapter 14, Flashback: A Brief History of Film, pg. 381.)

"To be an artist means never to avert one's eyes" (Chapter 11, Flashback: A Brief History of Film, pg. 260.)

"A time creates its own myths and heroes. If the heroes are less than admirable, that is a clue to the times" (Chapter 12, Flashback: A Brief History of Film, pg. 288.)

"Art attracts us only by what it reveals of our most secret self" (Chapter 13, Flashback: A Brief History of Film, pg. 316.)

"Film has been around for 100 years, and no matter what you do, you're going to run celluloid through a bunch of gears. It's gotten more sophisticated over the years, but it'll never get much more than what it is right now. With digital, we're at the very bottom of the medium. This is as bad as it's ever going to be. This is like 1895. In 25, 30 years, it's going to be amazing" (Chapter 20, Flashback: A Brief History of Film, pg. 556.)

"People in 2050 are going to look back at this century as the Golden Age of Cinema, not only in America but everywhere else" (Chapter 18, Flashback: A Brief History of Film, pg. 472.)

"A society that abandons the means of depicting itself would soon be an enslaved society" (Chapter 20, Flashback: A Brief History of Film, pg. 532.)

Topics for Discussion

How would you define the beginning of the moving picture movement in comparison to how the world defines it?

What inventions and discoveries made the most impact on the cinematic movement in the late 1800s?

Describe the situations that caused the rise and fall of the major studios both in the United States and in Europe.

In what manner did the war affect filmmaking in the United States and Europe?

What were the psychological effects of war on the film industry?

Who were the greatest influential actors and producers in the history of film and why do you think so?

Discuss the mechanics of making a film, offering the pros and cons of traditional studio filming versus New Wave methods.

What significant changes has film made in the past decade, and where do you think the film industry is headed?