



The Sundance Kids: How the Mavericks Took Back Hollywood

By James Mottram

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An appreciation of the young turks who took hold of Hollywood in the nineties: from P. T. Anderson to Spike Jonze to the godfather of them all, Steven Soderbergh

Hollywood is undergoing a renaissance, spawned by a vanguard of auteurs who for more than a decade have managed to turn La-La Land upside down. With films like *Boogie Nights*, *Rushmore*, *Being John Malkovich*, and *Memento*, young filmmakers have in many ways forced the major studios to march to the beat of their very different drummer.

In *Sundance Kids*, James Mottram paints a vibrant portrait of Hollywood as it stands today. Focusing on writers and directors who made their debuts in the nineties, Mottram takes a close look at how these mavericks have impacted the cinematic landscape. He explores the current state of the Hollywood studios; what it can mean now to be "independent" in the wake of mini-majors like Miramax and New Line; the particular influence of uncompromising artists like Steven Soderbergh and Quentin Tarantino; the unique platform provided them by the Sundance Film Festival; the contribution of British filmmakers like Sam Mendes to the mix; and how, for the first time since Paddy Chayefsky, writers such as Charlie Kaufman are becoming household names while playing a key part in the new Hollywood.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Mottram covers the same territory Sharon Waxman did in 2005's *Rebels on the Backlot*, including extensive considerations of directors Steven Soderbergh and Quentin Tarantino, but the British film journalist adds several filmmakers into the mix, including Sofia Coppola and Wes Anderson, concentrating primarily on hot young talents discovered at the Sundance Film Festival. He's also more interested in what's on the screen than Waxman was, so nearly every chapter has lengthy analyses of the movies discussed. But these interpretive flights distract from the reportage, especially when Mottram dismisses successful directors like Robert Rodriguez (who arguably have taken back Hollywood) because he doesn't consider movies like *Spy Kids* mature enough for serious consideration, or when he insists on linking every modern maverick to a counterpart in '70s cinema. He also links some films together by simplistic means, grouping a trilogy of films set in high schools in one chapter and building another chapter around Elmore Leonard adaptations. Mottram does give insight into the career trajectories of a few of his subjects, most notably Soderbergh, David Fincher and Bryan Singer, making his history a useful starting point. 50 b&w photos. (Apr.)

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From [Booklist](#)

The 1989 surprise success of Steven Soderbergh's *sex, lies, and videotape* after making a splash at the Sundance Film Festival is said by Mottram to have opened the doors to succeeding young Turk directors whose critical breakthroughs prefigured mainstream commercial triumphs. Covering much the same ground that Sharon Waxman did in *Rebels on the Backlot* (2005), Mottram makes a broader survey. Whereas Waxman focused on Soderbergh, Quentin Tarantino, Paul Thomas Anderson, David Fincher, Spike Jonze, and David O. Russell, Mottram encompasses those six; such peers of theirs as Richard Rodriguez, Richard Linklater, and Alexander Payne; and relative youngsters like Sofia Coppola and Wes Anderson. Mottram also covers the F-64 filmmakers collective, Soderbergh and other directors' abortive effort to maintain artistic control, and screenwriter-auteur Charlie Kaufman. Although Waxman got here first, and Mottram's premise that these mavericks have seized control of the studios is dubious, Mottram's broader scope and greater currency (he touches on Soderbergh's *Bubble*, whereas Waxman ends five years earlier, in 2000) gives the nod to *The Sundance Kids*. *Gordon Flagg*

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Review

"I've never been to Sundance--however, after reading this book, it feels as if I've been there and back. James Mottram makes clear the impact Sundance and all its players has had on the so-called Hollywood studio system, while breaking down the nature and structure of storytelling, something I continually struggle with, and articulating it in a manner that will enable the average movie lover to more fully understand the metaphorical undertones a writer/director is trying to achieve. The result is an enjoyable read, full of a wealth of information that leaves us asking, "what next?" *Milo Addica, Oscar-nominated screenwriter of Monster's Ball*

Users Review

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