



Hope for Film: From the Frontline of the Independent Cinema Revolutions

Ted Hope

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An inspiring, tell-all look at the indie film business from one of the industry's most passionate producers, *Hope for Film* captures the rebellious punk spirit of the indie film boom in 1990s New York City, its collapse two decades later and its current moment of technology-fueled regeneration. Ted Hope, whose films have garnered 12 Oscar nominations, draws from his own personal experiences working on the early films of Ang Lee, Eddie Burns, Hal Hartley, Michel Gondry, Nicole Holofcener, Todd Solondz and other indie mavericks, relating those decisions that brought him success as well as the occasional failure.

Whether navigating negotiations with Harvey Weinstein over final cuts or clashing with high-powered CAA agents over their clients, Hope offers behind-the-scenes stories from the wild and often heated world of low-budget cinema—where art and commerce collide. As mediator between these two opposing interests, Hope offers his unique perspective on how to make movies while keeping your integrity intact and how to create a sustainable business enterprise out of that art while staying true to yourself. Against a backdrop of seismic changes in the indie-film industry, from corporate co-option to the rise of social media, *Hope for Film* provides not only an entertaining and intimate ride through the ups and downs of the business of art-house movies over the last 25 years, but also hope for its future.

Hope for Film: From the Frontline of the Independent Cinema Revolutions Details

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Author : Ted Hope

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Felipe Rodríguez says

Informing and inspiring. Being the film enthusiast I am, this certainly gave me new perspectives on the indie film world. Ted Hope writes honestly, and even though I might not fully understand all the business talk, I could still get the all the passion he imprinted in the book.

Catarina Brito says

Para quem gosta de fazer cinema é um ótimo livro.

Ted Hope é uma inspiração e aumentou o meu desejo de ser produtora. Mas também reforçou a ideia de que será um percurso muito difícil, mas worth it!

Jeremy Wilker says

This book about the life and insights of an Indie film producer with some notable credentials to his name actually far exceeded my expectations. As an indie filmmaker I found it to be an engrossing story of a career in film, full of valuable lessons and hard truths. This is not a how-to guidebook, but if you are a filmmaker yourself and you didn't pick up some valuable tips here and there I would be completely surprised. Ted's story is great and I love his relentless pursuit of building a better filmmaking machine for us all. He's not afraid to tell it like it is and ask hard questions that challenge us to do some intense thinking and encourage us all to get involved to create the new answers.

Vikram Thakor says

I thought this would give me an insightful guide on becoming a producer, but its just about ups and downs of his personal life... there is one incident in the book where he talks about how he fell in love with his wife. This book was strictly okay...

Karen McQuestion says

I once read that Cindy Williams got a producer credit on a movie just for suggesting the concept to a friend at lunch. I have no idea if that's correct or not (apologies to Ms. Williams if it's not) but ever since then, I've had the idea that producers are a lot like the owners of restaurant where I once worked. They hire the staff, have a manager (director) oversee it all, and take credit for everyone else's hard work.

I was wrong. By a lot.

From the book: "Producing is not just making sure everything scripted is there for the camera. You have to produce an environment and a sense of community. You need to inspire people to have the trust and confidence that they can make more of what they have. And when everyone is aiming for greatness, the atmosphere becomes kind of heady. It's not just a job anymore. Everyone wants to be there, and it's infectious and inspiring."

There's a whole more to the job than I assumed, and learning the inside details was fascinating. My only gripe is that I would loved to have read more gossip about the people Mr. Hope worked with. Alas, he took the high road, alluding to conflicts but always portraying individuals in a good light. Understandable, seeing as he may work with some of these people again, but as a reader, it felt like he held back.

Knowing his background and philosophies of film making, I'm excited to see what he does as head of Amazon Studios.

Reading says

Pleasant enough distraction but not as informative as I had anticipated regarding current and future trends and ways to adapt. His stories took me back to experiences of my order on set and had me laughing about the business and then signing and feeling down the next.

If you are looking for more autobiography and less filmmaking business practices then this book is for you.

Teng Zhang says

Stories and lessons told by one of the masters of contemporary American independent film producers.

Nick says

Ted Hope sure has the right last name. His has been an always hopeful vision for how the indie film and video movement can remain viable in the face of wave upon wave of massive change – in technology, business models, audience behavior, and social change.

And so his new book, *Hope for Film: From the Frontline of the Independent Cinema Revolutions*, enshrines the autologically clever title that has graced his very informative blog for many years.

Hope's activism is unique, bubbling from within a career of more than 70 independent features over the past three decades (which he has described as an addiction.)

It's pretty hard to be a lover of indie cinema without encountering a Ted Hope film, including films from such directors as Ang Lee, Todd Field, Ed Burns, Nicole Holofcener, Bart Freundlich, John Waters, Mike Mills, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Tamara Jenkins, Michel Gondry, Hal Hartley, Todd Solondz, Sean Durkin, Greg Mottola, Alan Ball among others, whose stories comprise much of this fascinating memoir. These are wonderful stories, and a primer on what an indie producer actually does. Which is a lot!

“We dreamed of art fueled by a love of cinema,” he writes, noting that at the beginning it seemed that this “would be enough to sustain ourselves, both financially and creatively.”

It worked for a while, as the indie film exploded creatively, and Sundance became a household word. “All of us in the industry were in for a big surprise,” writes Hope. “Entertainment industries across the board were about to face their most disruptive era, and few of us were truly prepared for it.”

Disruption caused by new technologies (in production, editing, distribution, marketing). And, disruption caused by greed, as “independent filmmaking became the business of profit margins rather than the underserved audience.”

Hope jumped on the opportunities presented by digital, hoping that they would help counter what he saw as an increasingly “outdated and unsustainable model.”

“Without a business model fitted for the times we are living in,” he writes, “budgets will continue to shrink, which has a profound effect on the types of stories that are told, and how they’re being realized.” Not to mention the impact on the financial viability of films, filmmakers and those whose investments get them made.

Increasingly, Hope became convinced that the whole ecosystem of indie film needed “a complete systems reboot.” He began speaking and writing and making lists of how to improve the indie business – very specific, very practical, and very necessary --posts with less-than-hopeful titles like: “38 More Ways The Film Industry Is Failing Today” and “The Really Bad Things In The Indie Film Biz 2012.” Hope talked about the crisis, and the need for collective action.

As I read these pages, it was hard to miss his increasing disappointment that so few of his fellows, not to mention certain organizations, haven’t embraced this path of collective action.

“At a certain point, living an independent life, you start to recognize how fragile the whole enterprise is. You can’t afford to ignore the big picture. And you can’t do it alone,” writes Hope, as he shifts gears in the final chapters to share the story of how he left New York and hands-on production to focus on that “reboot,” first in an ill-fated stint at the San Francisco Film Society, and now as CEO of Fandor, an indie-focused streaming video-on-demand service, where he’s busy trying to tackle some of the “141 Problems and Opportunities for the Independent Film World,” which is included in this book as an appendix.

“I hope that by earning a living in a new way, I can start to focus on my dreams more,” writes Hope, and cites uber-producer Saul Zaentz as an man he would emulate.

Myself, I was put in mind of another great film executive/producer, David Picker, whose 2013 book “Musts, Maybes, and Nevers” told the story of United Artists, which, as Picker wrote, “put a wedge in the studio control of content in the mid-twentieth century” to build a home for independent talent until it too “succumbed to the financial support provided by institutions that didn’t comprehend the nature of the businesses they acquired. As delivery methods expanded, soon the very nature of the film business changed.” (My review)

The UA era paved the way for the “new” indie movement -- the classic Sundance era and Ted Hope -- which is now giving way to, well to something different. No question that whatever it is, Ted Hope will be passionate, just as he was in the pages of this important memoir/manifesto.

Wei Liu says

Hope's honest, humble and sincere writing makes this book a wonderful read, even for those (like me) who are not that familiar with the indie film scene. I enjoyed reading the behind scene stories about the author working with the directors like Ang Lee, Tamara Jenkins, Todd Solondz, etc. Fascinating.

The last chapter, focusing on Hope's hopeless effort to revive San Francisco Film Society, is interesting, but that episode doesn't fit into this book. Since Hope has some strong words about what went wrong with the current indie film scene, I thought that the chapter should lay out what specifically he would do to lead the change (The long list the author attached is more of a laundry list than of a cohesive plan).

Fortunately, Mr. Hope is now in the position--as the new director of Amazon Studio's Original Movies Division--to walk the talk. Look forward to see how Hope's new chapter is going to unfold.

I'm very hopeful.

Erin says

I received a copy of this book through the Goodreads First Reads program.

"Hope for Film" takes a look at the changing nature of indie films and Ted Hope's role as a producer in the industry.

This would be a good book to read along with Robert Evans "The Kid Stays in the Picture." Both look at the producer's role in film, but where Evans worked on mainly big budget films, Hope deals with smaller, independent films. And while Evans focused a lot on his personal life, Hope is more concerned with the movies he helped create.

Occasionally the book gets a little too deep into the details of lining up money for films. I can see how it might appeal to someone who is interested in the financial side of making movies, but personally I think the book is strongest when Hope focuses less on finance and more on the actual films. Like the struggle to get a physical copy of "Walking and Talking" to Sundance after a whole lot of plane trouble, or how a whole community helped to make John Water's "Dirty Shame" come together.

It's a really good book, definitely worth checking out if you are at all interested in independent film.

Josh Folan says

Indie producing legend tells stories from the trenches. Certainly a thing or two to be learned here, if you're into learning about things.

Gretchen says

Very interesting book. I received this as part of a First Reads Giveaway. I enjoyed reading about the independent film industry. Very good read.

Rob Charpentier says

Although I had previously been completely unaware of producer Ted Hope's existence he apparently has been one of the biggest champions of bringing many of my absolute favorites movies of all time to the screen. [Amateur, American Splendor, The Devil and Daniel Johnston, The Savages, Super, to name but a few] So, it only took a quick look at some of the titles that he had been involved in for me to want to read his book. However, in the end, despite my interest I really don't think this book was aimed at someone like me in particular, the avid independent movie fan, but is more for those actually in the industry or those considering a career in making films. The book manages to work on other levels but primarily it's an insider's account for those that want to follow in Hope's footsteps.

However, it was a worthwhile read in other ways and it did change the way I look at a few things. Up to now, I have never once really thought for one instant about becoming a fan of a film producer. Surely, there are writers, directors, and actors worth following but producers? For me, although they certainly have their importance, I basically considered this particular role as playing only the smallest of parts in the overall creative outcome of any movie. I thought of them as merely being nothing more than middle management, someone who is ultimately more concerned with the finances of a film than anything else. This book has opened my eyes to this hasty dismissal.

Of course, Hope seems to be in a class by himself and is more of the exception than the rule. In a great many instances he is actually more of a collaborator on the films that he's worked on. Overall, even when he's not wearing several different hats, from assistant director to editor, to bring a particular film to the screen he is without question a huge fan of the independents and tends to only lend his talents to projects that he wholeheartedly believes in. The story of his life and his involvement in film shows not only in words but also by example that he has nothing but integrity on this point.

This book details the many struggles Hope has faced to make many of these films happen. Naturally, there is an enormous focus on money here considering the innate astronomical cost of making films and even maverick rebel producers such as Hope cannot but help being primarily concerned with this aspect. I found some of this interesting but I couldn't sustain enough of it to read about it in every chapter. Although this may only be my own personal quirk, the amount of space written about these matters marred the book for me. All in all, I do not in any way envy him the seemingly eternal fight that he has faced in this endeavor but I can easily admire him for his dedication as well as to be thankful that people like him have taken it upon themselves to make this their life work. The world would truly not be the same without him, or at least my little corner of it.

On the upside, there is an underlying philosophy stated here that is uplifting for anyone that dreams of making a life in film or any other creative endeavor for that matter. It entails being true to oneself while at the same time respecting others individual's visions. I have nothing but respect for those that try to live their dream and even more for those that succeed. Although truly inspiring, in my estimation this book does not seem to provide much practicalities for others doing the same. Much of Hope's success is through his own

admission is through sheer perseverance and more than a little luck.

Despite some of the flaws that I found in this book the last few chapters seem to drive the main point home in a big way. This boils down to what Hope describes as the struggle between “artistic-centric versus gatekeeper-controlled; capital-intensive versus low-cost; consumers’ impulse-driven transactions versus considered choices; and the collaborative efforts of self-empowered creators versus the corporate monolith.” Here, Hope just shines in his assessment and personal struggle in his arguments for making quality and challenging worthwhile films and the book ends on the best possible note. We definitely need more people like him fighting the good fight and possibly this book will guide a few of those aspiring to this aim...Hopefully.

I received this book in a Goodreads giveaway in exchange for an honest review.

Don O'goodreader says

What is a film producer? Who is a film producer?

You understand actors. Can you name 3? Easy! Jolie, Willis, Bullock, and on and on...

How about directors? No problem! Tarantino, Kurosawa, Scott.

Now what about producers? What do they do anyway? Ted Hope is a producer. His book Hope for Film by Ted Hope is a manifesto for producers and an inspiration for aspiring producers.

Anyone with an interest in film, and especially the changes brought about by the Internet, social networking, and streaming, should read this book.

For more see: <http://bit.ly/1vBVgOU>

I won a copy of this book in a Goodreads First Reads giveaway on August 27, 2014. I received my copy on September 9, 2014.

Brendan says

Fine but not sure there is real actionable info in here, which the book purports to have. Fun anecdotal information, little by way of tangible film producing information.
