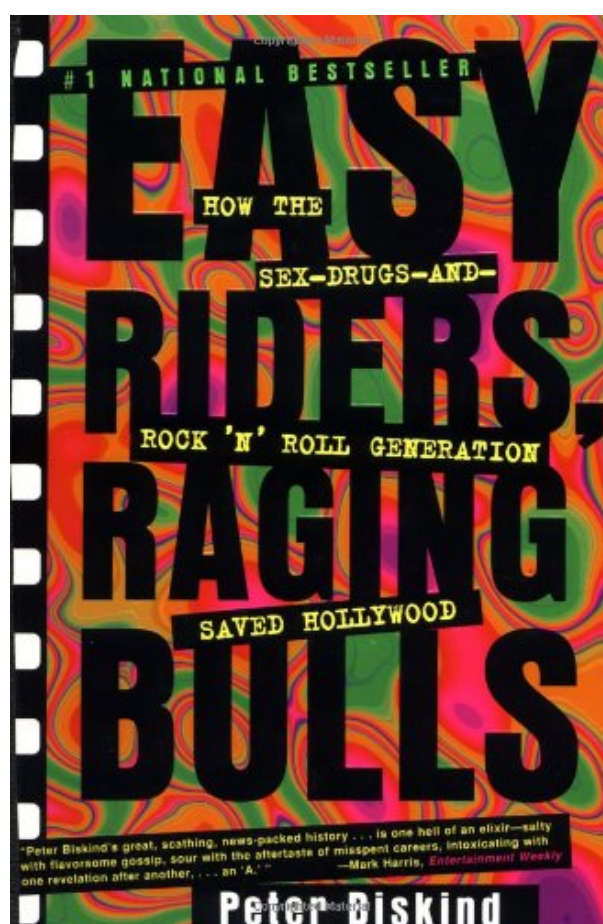
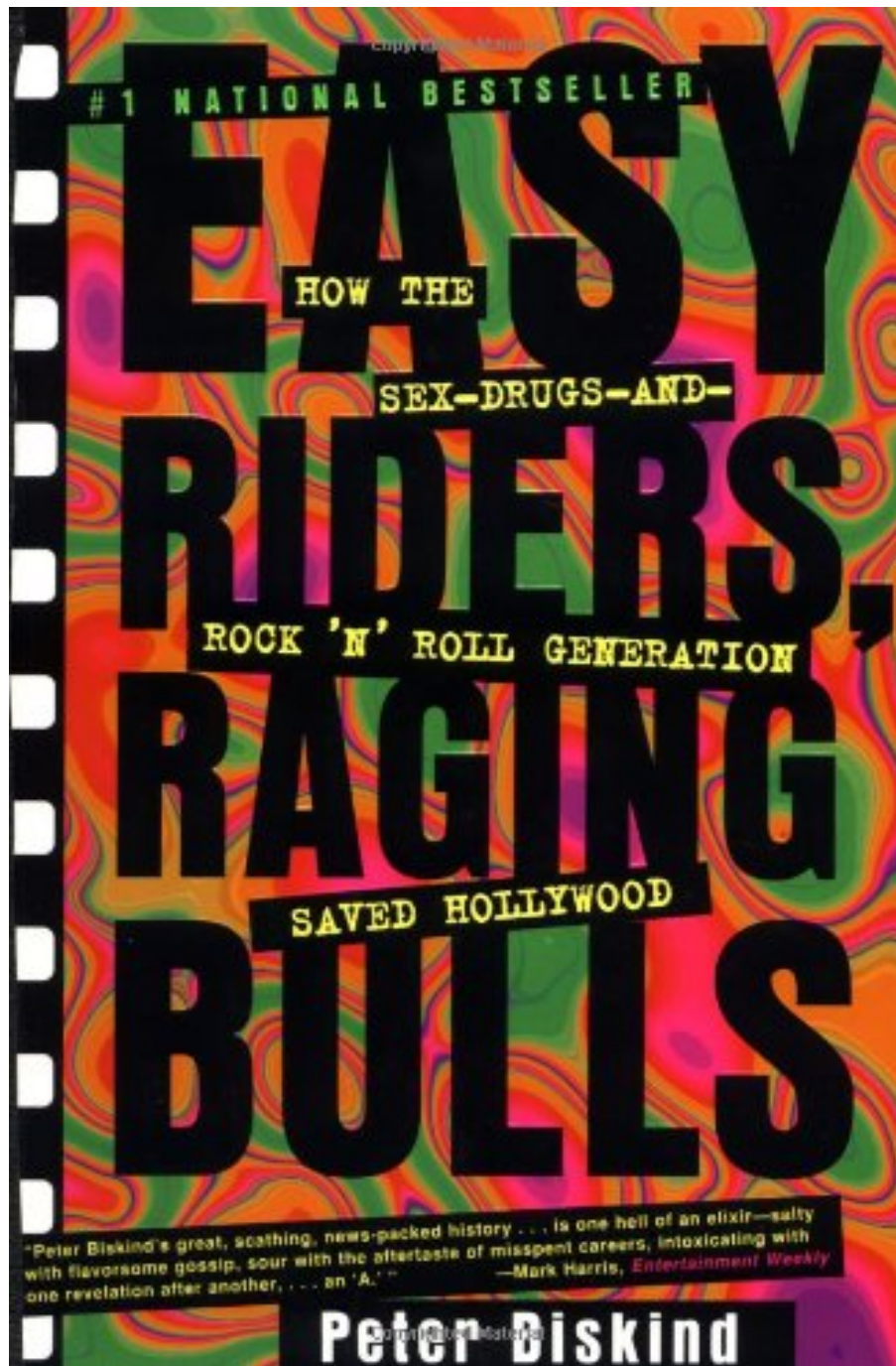


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Amazon.com Review

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BY PETER BISKIND PDF

When the low-budget biker movie *Easy Rider* shocked Hollywood with its success in 1969, a new Hollywood era was born. This was an age when talented young filmmakers such as Scorsese, Coppola, and Spielberg, along with a new breed of actors, including De Niro, Pacino, and Nicholson, became the powerful figures who would make such modern classics as *The Godfather*, *Chinatown*, *Taxi Driver*, and *Jaws*. *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls* follows the wild ride that was Hollywood in the '70s -- an unabashed celebration of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll (both onscreen and off) and a climate where innovation and experimentation reigned supreme. Based on hundreds of interviews with the directors themselves, producers, stars, agents, writers, studio executives, spouses, and ex-spouses, this is the full, candid story of Hollywood's last golden age.

MARTIN SCORSESE ON DRUGS: "I did a lot of drugs because I wanted to do a lot, I wanted to push all the way to the very very end, and see if I could die."

DENNIS HOPPER ON EASY RIDER: "The cocaine problem in the United States is really because of me. There was no cocaine before *Easy Rider* on the street. After *Easy Rider*, it was everywhere."

GEORGE LUCAS ON STAR WARS: "Popcorn pictures have always ruled. Why do people go see them? Why is the public so stupid? That's not my fault."

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Fascinating

By Charlie

This is a really long read but I'm mesmerized as this was my era and I enjoyed so many of the movies made from that time which was really a breakaway from old time Hollywood. Very fascinating to hear about the stories behind the *Godfather*, *Jaws*, *Easy Rider* and so many more!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Five Stars

By Gunner

Wow, this book puts all the pieces together!

24 of 28 people found the following review helpful.

Too easy and a lot of bull

By JLR

Good Lord, is this book overrated?

Peter Biskind's *EASY RIDERS, RAGING BULLS* is a perfect example on how NOT to write about movie history. In this case, it's the period between 1968-1980; a decade when directors like Spielberg, Scorsese, Altman and Coppola became powerful figures in the movie industry, releasing classics like "Jaws" (1975), "Taxi Driver" (1976), "Nashville" (1975) and "The Godfather" (1972). Biskind makes an effort to comprehend the entire decade in the span of 430-435 pages and fails miserably.

Throughout the entire book, Biskind makes one flawed argument after another, making generalizations about the state of movies by focusing on only a small section of what was released at the time. For instance, Biskind makes a romantic hyperbole that the movies of the 1970s became successful because audiences were part of the Cahiers du Cinema crowd that desired for watch tougher and more challenging fare. Wrong. As David A. Cook's terrific book, *LOST ILLUSIONS*, illustrates, the top stars of that decade were not method actors like Al Pacino, Dustin Hoffman or Robert De Niro, but action heroes like Burt Reynolds, Clint Eastwood, Sylvester Stallone and Robert Redford. Some of the most successful movies of that decade were not artistic statements like "McCabe & Mrs. Miller" (1971) or "Amarcord" (1974), but movies that were either modeled after the exploitation circuit ("The Texas Chainsaw Massacre"; "The Rocky Horror Picture Show"; "The Omen"; "The Exorcist"), star-studded Hollywood epics ("Airport"; "The Poseidon Adventure"; "Earthquake"; "The Towering Inferno") or violent action movies ("The Godfather"; "Death Wish"; "Deliverance"; "Billy Jack"; "The Getaway"; the Dirty Harry and James Bond movies). Sensation, not artistry, was the rule, then as now. Moviegoers may admire De Niro for putting on 25-30 pounds but chances are they would rather watch Eastwood blow away bad guys than hear De Niro recite a line from "On the Waterfront" (1954).

When Biskind is not making generalizations, he irrationally points fingers at those that he feels were responsible for closing the door on European and artistically inclined American movies. In the last third of the book, Spielberg and George Lucas are vilified as the culprits that helped pave the way of the blockbuster mentality, but readers never get the sense that many of the top domestic hits of the early-to-mid 1970s were, in fact, disaster and Hollywood epics that were critically reviled and heavily promoted by studios; to speak little of the many lousy exploitation and horror movies that were generating revenue at the time. By the end of the book, Biskind asserts that American cinema is the worst state it has ever been, which means that despite the presence of American movies made by David Lynch, Quentin Tarantino, the Coen Brothers, Lawrence Kasdan, Oliver Stone and John Sayles, American movies have sucked since "Star Wars". Lord.

And for a book that claims to be a comprehensive account on the 1970s, there is a truckload of errors all over the place. In one glaring example, Biskind writes that "up to 1975, no picture cost more than \$15 million". Gee, I didn't know movies like "Ben-Hur" (1959), "Cleopatra" (1963), "War and Peace" (1966-1967) and "Lawrence of Arabia" (1962) cost less than that. He wrongly asserts that before Warren Beatty, there was little to zero precedent for an actor to produce a picture (uh, hello? Charles Chaplin, anyone?). He writes that film critic Pauline Kael was a patron saint for New Hollywood directors, ignoring the fact that Kael disliked not only some of the American classics of the 1960s-1970s ("The Graduate", "Dirty Harry", "Coming Home", "Raging Bull", "Days of Heaven", "Apocalypse Now", "Barry Lyndon", "Deliverance", "The Sting", "American Graffiti", "Little Big Man", "Serpico", "Network", "A Clockwork Orange", "The Ballad of Cable Hogue", "Blazing Saddles", "Annie Hall"), but also movies that had a huge influence on 1970s directors such as "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946), "8 1/2" (1962), "The Searchers" (1956), "Vertigo" (1958), "Dr. Strangelove" (1964), "2001: A Space Odyssey" (1968), "Last Year at Marienbad" (1961) and the movies made by Cassavetes, Antonioni and Ozu. And in one glaring oversight, Biskind scarcely mentions the careers of Sam Peckinpah, Arthur Penn and Brian De Palma, three directors that helped bring graphic violence to the mainstream movies.

But perhaps the book's greatest flaw, and one that will date this book in retrospect, is that Biskind reduces

certain movies to a set of ideological symptoms, in that Biskind believes that the greatness and reason for movies' popularity is how they reflected the American politics of their time and the future. For example, Biskind writes that "The Godfather" hit a cultural nerve because it presented a premise that the American dream was an illusion and that Mafia provides better justice than the government. Nice try. No one who watched "The Godfather" at the time liked it due to the fact that it reflected the Nixon era. Serious moviegoers may study Gordon Willis' shadowy cinematography as a visual metaphor of corrupt America but virtually everyone else will clamor more on how Al Pacino blew that police officer's head off in the famous restaurant scene. Similarly, anyone who saw "Bonnie and Clyde" (1967) in its initial release was more invigorated by the gory violence than the fact that it reflected counterculture sentiment.

And, my personal favorite, Biskind writes that movies like "The Godfather", "The Exorcist", "Jaws", "Star Wars" (1977) and "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" (1977) somehow made the world safe for Reagan, although even a serious film scholar will wonder how in the world a gangster movie in 1972, a horror movie in 1973, a thriller in 1975 and two science-fiction movies in 1977, all made by liberal filmmakers, could have predicted the arrival of a right-wing administration in 1980?

It's one thing to say that Scorsese, Coppola and Altman made great movies (they did); it's another to say that movies were made during a time when audiences were on the side of the artists. That time has never existed. Before "Jaws", before "Star Wars", before "Rocky", audiences were flocking to see "Death Wish", "Billy Jack", "Airport", "Earthquake" and "Magnum Force". There's been good movies and bad movies and bad movies have always made more money than the good ones. This has always been the case before "Star Wars" and after "Star Wars". For every "Raging Bull" and "There Will Be Blood", there'll always be a ""Death Wish III" or "Transformers 2".

Anyone who wants a better overview of the 1970s American cinema is well-advised to pick up David Cook's LOST ILLUSIONS, which covers greater ground and is refreshingly free of the shallow writing found on this dreck. EASY RIDERS, on the other hand, should only be used as a doorstep or a fly swatter. Reading this book is strongly unadvised.

Strongest recommendation to avoid.

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