

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

For the Movie Business, a Fulcrum Year

Adam Leipzig · Wednesday, March 5th, 2014

For us in the movie business, a day can seem like a year. We rise early and work late, ricocheting from crisis to calm to crisis as we scan information and keep creating back-up plans. What will we do if the star rejects the rewrite? If the numbers are bad in Japan? If next week's opening tracks poorly? If our company's share price is down in early trading? If we get fired tomorrow? If the shoot is three weeks over-schedule? If we just got out-bid on the spec script?

All the while we're responding to 500 emails, texts and phone calls a day, clicking social media to stay on what's trending, keeping one eye on disruptive technologies and the other eye on the clock because we have to be at Soho House by eight. We hit refresh on *Hollywood Reporter*, *Deadline.com*, *The Wrap* and *Variety*, to make sure we don't get blindsided, and to ensure we never lose perspective, we reload Anne Thompson's Indiewire blog, *Thompson on Hollywood*.

Thompson has been reporting on Hollywood for more than two decades, initially at the *Hollywood Reporter* and now online. Her tenure in the movie business is about the same as mine and, full disclosure, we've known each other many of those years because Hollywood is a specific village.

Thompson has just written her first book, *The \$11 Billion Year*, which takes us out of the moment-to-moment, and looks at the business through the time-slice of one year, 2012. And what a year it was, with broddingnagian tentpole failures (*John Carter*, *Battleship*) and billion-dollar giants (*The Avengers*, *The Dark Knight Rises*), full of executive churn and industry-wide recalibration, of changing consumer behavior and game-changing moments, as when Netflix committed to *House of Cards*.

The \$11 Billion Year begins with the paradox of death within life. Its title comes from the fact that 2012 brought \$11 billion in box office, so the industry must be healthy, right? Not so, as Thompson, the ablest of tour guides, explains. The business is shifting mightily, and no one knows for certain who will survive into the next decade: who will adapt and who will die? Death haunts the story, too, with the sad, too-soon passing of Bingham Ray, fierce and generous fighter for independent film, who died of a stroke at the Sundance Film Festival in January.

It is at Sundance, in January, that Thompson begins her year-long chronicle. Moving through the year, she shares the movie business's steady calendar, against which disquiet plays. Sundance, South by Southwest, Cannes, Comic-Con, fall festivals, holiday movies and Oscar races—here is the cycle by which we insiders measure our lives. Among the many virtues of this book is Thompson's ability open a window on our industry for people who buy tickets and love film, and simultaneously share insightful analysis for those of us who toil in its fields.

In reading *The \$11 Billion Year* I found myself reliving 2012 through its movies and events, and you may do the same. Where were you when you saw *Silver Linings Playbook*? *Zero Dark Thirty*? *Lincoln*? *Skyfall*? *The Hunger Games*? You'll come away with admiration for the courageous people who make exceptional films on the shifting business landscape, and an insider's grasp of what we go through, day by day.

Get 'The \$11 Billion Year' in hardcover or Kindle.

Top image: Scarlett Johansson is Black Widow in 'Marvel's The Avengers,' the top-grossing film of 2012. Photo courtesy Marvel Studios/Walt Disney Studios.

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