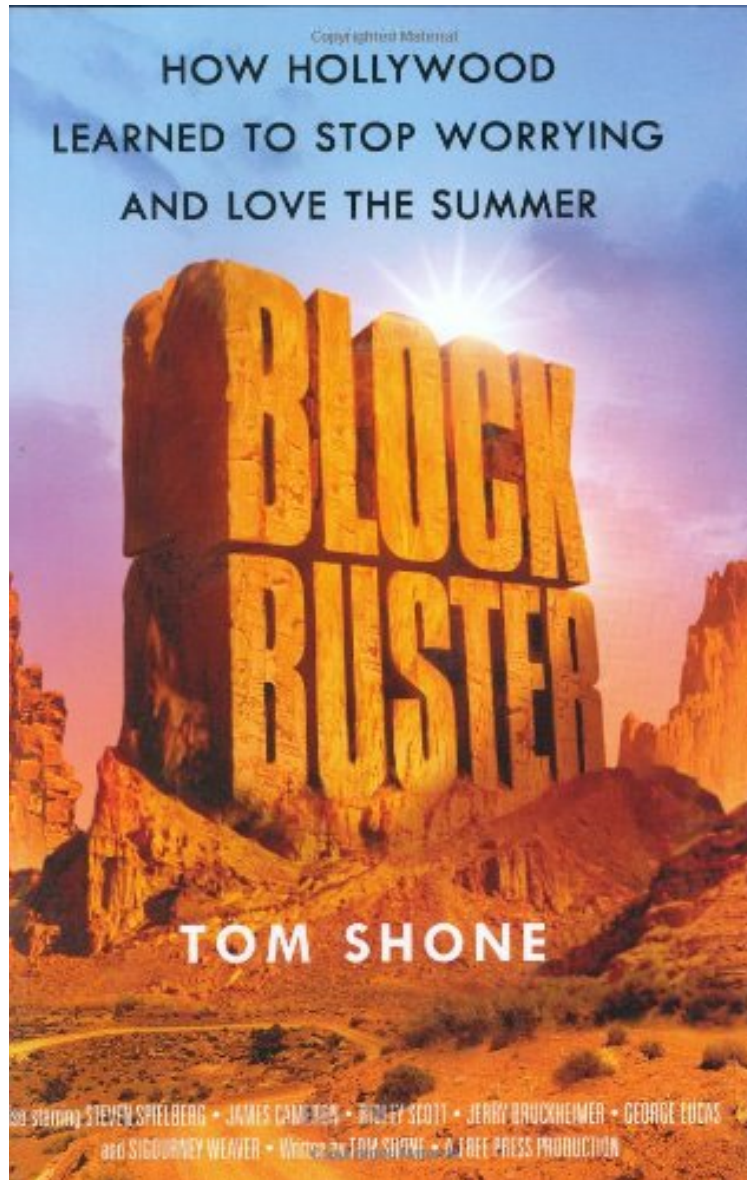


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Blockbuster: How Hollywood Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Summer

Tom Shone

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Tom Shone : Blockbuster: How Hollywood Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Summer before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blockbuster: How Hollywood Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Summer:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Interesting and amusing analysis of the "Jaws Jedi" generation of

film-makingBy BackdrifterSome reviewers here accuse Shone of being simplistic in his rebuff of Peter Biskind's Easy Riders etc but in fact it's simplistic to view the book in this way. I think Shone just wishes to continue the story beyond the point at which Biskind chose to end his; the Biskind-bashing very evident in the early chapters comes off the back of this but one of Shone's main points is that Jaws and Star Wars should/can be seen as artistically rich and groundbreaking in their own right, just in a different vein to the films of Biskind's heroes. The view glibly asserted by an earlier reviewer here, that Spielberg and his ilk are "dull" and therefore unsatisfying as subject matter, is exactly the somewhat sniffy received opinion that Shone attacks, and it's a pleasure to read, as is the long-overdue puncturing of some sacred icons. He isn't simply defending anything that gets called a blockbuster - he calls into question our use of that term when it's often used to describe over-hyped films that open big and then vanish. What is definitely simplistic is the notion that this is a phenomenon that can be blamed purely on Jaws and Star Wars. I also like a good, genuinely informative list and his highest-earning films list adjusted for inflation I found very interesting (most of the very recent biggies vanish). And any book that has a graph of audience reactions during Jaws gets my vote. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Ignore the mistakes, don't think too hard... and enjoy!,By J KI've always liked Tom Shone's writing: it's pithy, insightful and often funny. He's also good with a clever argument, as long as you don't think it through too much. So it is here, indeed the general thrust of his thesis on how the blockbuster movie came to dominate Hollywood is brilliant at a glance; perforated when you give it any detailed consideration. There are also some howlers of mistakes - for example, he lists Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom as being released in 1989 (I assume he means Last Crusade; TOD came out in 1984). And sometimes the writing strays the wrong side of the line of hyperbole: trying to compare the making of Titanic with what soldiers experienced in the trenches of WW1 is a bit much. But if you can put all of this aside, don't concentrate too much on the details, this is a fun history of moviemaking since the 70s. 9 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating, even if you're not a film buffBy A. ChathamI watch a fair amount of movies, but I would hardly call myself a "film buff". I was a little skeptical of the book, but I bought it anyway on Nick Hornby's recommendation in Polysyllabic Spree. It turns out that this is a pretty fascinating subject. I wouldn't have thought I'd be very interested in the making of Batman or Titanic, but I couldn't put the book down. Shone has a very engaging writing style, and the book is as much a history of people as much as of movies. He starts with the first big blockbusters of 25 years ago -- Jaws, Star Wars, ET, Alien -- and recreates the excitement we felt when we first saw them. The latter half of the book examines Hollywood's hubristic blockbusters -- Godzilla, Last Action Hero -- and how we all went to see them anyway. I always thought of the big summer action films as something Hollywood slapped together to make a buck, but sometimes they represent somebody's dreams (Back to the Future). Then again, sometimes they really are something slapped together to make a buck, maybe crushing some dreams in the process (Batman, Godzilla). If you're a movie snob, you may not like this book. Shone is going to take Spielberg over Scorsese, and you know if you're not going to like that. But if you can take that, I think you'll really like this book, and I say that as someone who hasn't even seen Jaws.

It's a typical summer Friday night and the smell of popcorn is in the air. Throngs of fans jam into air-conditioned multiplexes to escape for two hours in the dark, blissfully lost in Hollywood's latest glittery confection complete with megawatt celebrities, awesome special effects, and enormous marketing budgets. The world is in love with the blockbuster movie, and these cinematic behemoths have risen to dominate the film industry, breaking box office records every weekend. With the passion and wit of a true movie buff and the insight of an internationally renowned critic, Tom Shone is the first to make sense of this phenomenon by taking readers through the decades that have shaped the modern blockbuster and forever transformed the face of Hollywood. The moment the shark fin broke the water in 1975, a new monster was born. Fast, visceral, and devouring all in its path, the blockbuster had arrived. In just a few weeks Jaws earned more than \$100 million in ticket sales, an unprecedented feat that heralded a new era in film. Soon, blockbuster auteurs such as Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, and James Cameron would revive the flagging fortunes of the studios and lure audiences back into theaters with the promise of thrills, plenty of action, and an escape from art house pretension. But somewhere along the line, the beast they awakened took on a life of its own, and by the 1990s production budgets had escalated as quickly as profits. Hollywood entered a topsy-turvy world ruled by marketing and merchandising mavens, in which flops like Godzilla made money and hits had to break records just to break even. The blockbuster changed from a major event that took place a few times a year into something that audiences have come to expect weekly, piling into the backs of one another in an annual demolition derby that has left even Hollywood aghast. Tom Shone has interviewed all the key participants -- from cinematic visionaries like Spielberg and Lucas and the executives who greenlight these spectacles down to the effects wizards who detonated the Death Star and blew up the White House -- in order to reveal the ways in which blockbusters have transformed how Hollywood makes movies and how we watch them. As entertaining as the films it chronicles, Blockbuster is a must-read for any fan who delights in the magic of the movies.

From Publishers WeeklyShone's first book is an entertaining chronological survey of top-grossing films during the past 30 summers, beginning with Universal's Jaws (1975). The Steven Spielberg film became a phenomenon, breaking

the \$100-million mark. When movie attendance was at an all-time low in the early 1970s, Shone explains, studios had been keeping costs down, but they changed that tactic and began spending more and developing new marketing and merchandising methods. It worked. By that decade's end, box office returns had tripled, due to 22 films, each earning more than \$50 million. Ticket sales soared as Paramount went from *The Godfather* to *Grease*, Fox launched *Star Wars* and Columbia scored with *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. To trace the evolution of summer blockbuster films through three decades, Shone, former London Sunday Times film critic, interviewed more than 40 talents, including Spielberg, John Lasseter, George Lucas, Martin Scorsese, Ridley Scott, Sigourney Weaver and Richard Zanuck. He devotes full chapters to *Titanic* ("the world's first billion-dollar blockbuster") and other "event movies." Although reams have been published about such films as *Alien* and *Blade Runner*, Shone writes with verve, producing a probing, intelligent analysis. Photos. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist
In the mid-1970s, while Hollywood was parading stars in one disaster film after another, Steven Spielberg broke things wide open with the release of *Jaws*. By today's standards, the movie used cheesy special effects, mainly a rubber shark, and the beast doesn't even appear until 80 minutes into the film. But it became the first of the big summer blockbusters, a true phenomenon that people went to see over and over. Shone, an international film critic, takes us on a tour of 30 years of blockbuster movies, showing how the industry went from pure luck to deliberately manufacturing blockbuster hits, so-called high-concept movies backed by big-name directors, megastars, and special effects, costing upward of \$100 million. He goes behind the scenes on such films as *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones*, *Alien*, *Titanic*, and *Jurassic Park*, through the pitches, the rewrites, and the extensive marketing machine. Although the reader may bemoan how one of America's greatest art forms has been reduced to entertainment aimed at 13-year-olds, Shone's biting analyses are on target. David Siegfried
Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved.
"Kirkus s" (starred review)
The lowdown on a word beloved by film executives, loathed by film critics, and not quite understood by anybody.... "Blockbuster" mixes trenchant film analysis and history with a practical understanding of the industry itself...an impressively learned narrative. One of those rare film books that walks the fine line between populist tub-thumping and sky-is-falling, Sontag-esque screed.