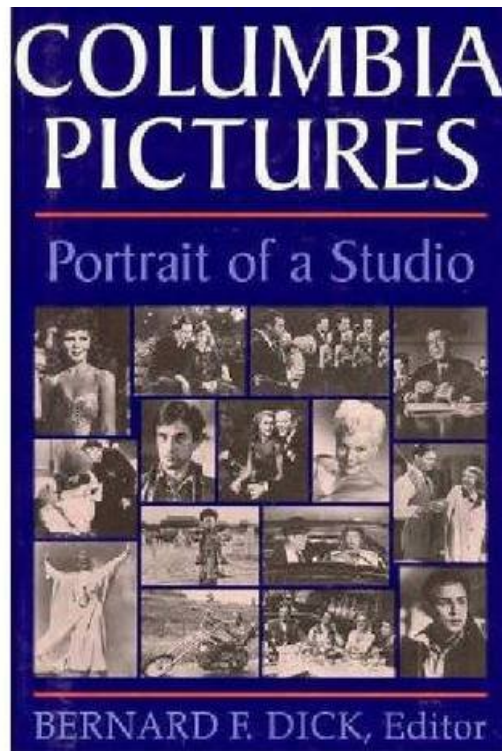


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From Brand: The University Press of Kentucky : Columbia Pictures: Portrait of a Studio before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Columbia Pictures: Portrait of a Studio:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The History and Style of Columbia PicturesBy Michael RyanI have entitled this review the history and style of Columbia Pictures for one central reason. The text of Columbia Pictures: Portrait of a Studio is divided fairly evenly between the two approaches, between a short introduction detailing the history of Columbia to about the early 1990's, followed by stylistic essays penned by associate authors. The later delve into the stylistic approaches and stylistic specialties that marked the earlier decades of Columbia's production. Columbia was really the largest of the minor Hollywood studios, focusing in its early years on mostly B movie production. That is until Frank Capra's Academy Award win in 1935 for "It Happened One Night" which put Columbia on the track to compete with the majors as, perhaps, the smallest "major" studio. The material that author/editor Bernard Dick apparently researched and included is very much like the historical sketch that introduces the studio book, "The Columbia Story". The studio book is far better illustrated, of course, than the more modest book edited by Bernard Dick. Dick's book is very much like the type of monograph that college professors write in fulfillment of their contractual research and teaching responsibilities as university faculty members. Dick's "Portrait of a Studio" is very much in the vein of that type of monograph. The history part of the book runs only 64 pages with notes and a chronology. To fill-out the remainder of the book's 230 pages, the author/editor includes essays of

associates or colleagues who, in the main, are other professors of English at the college level. So I would characterize this book as more an academic monograph than a trade publication. Some of the essays, included, are excellent specialty explorations of topics as diverse as Film Noir at Columbia and the Rita Hayworth phenomenon at Columbia. These shed new light on those aspects of Columbia's history as a studio. There is a fine exploration of Frank Capra's contribution of his classic films to the studio and how their themes elevated Columbia's product. There is a good short interview with the Columbia screenwriter Daniel Taradash, and other informative criticism of the "art of Columbia". There is a lot of good information in Bernard Dick's assembly of research and criticism, including a fine appendix listing the Columbia features, by year, from 1920 through 1991. So about twenty years worth of the recent Columbia pipeline releases, under its new and present departmentalization at Sony Pictures, are not covered by the book. The book is an interesting read combining both history and criticism.

The recent \$3.4 billion purchase of Columbia Pictures by Sony Corporation focused attention on a studio that had survived one of Hollywood's worst scandals under David Begelman, as well as ownership by Coca-Cola and David Puttnam's misguided attempt to bring back the studio's glory days. Columbia Pictures traces Columbia's history from its beginnings as the CBC Film Sales Company (nicknamed "Corned Beef and Cabbage") through the regimes of Harry Cohn and his successors, and concludes with a vivid portrait of today's corporate Hollywood, with its investment bankers, entertainment lawyers, agents, and financiers. Bernard F. Dick's highly readable studio chronicle is followed by thirteen original essays by leading film scholars, writing about the stars, films, genres, writers, producers, and directors responsible for Columbia's emergence from Poverty Row status to world class. This is the first attempt to integrate film history with film criticism of a single studio. Both the historical introduction and the essays draw on previously untapped archival material: budgets that kept Columbia in the black during the 1930s and 1940s, letters that reveal the rapport between Depression audiences and director Frank Capra, and an interview with Oscar-winning screenwriter Daniel Taradash. The book also offers new perspectives on the careers of Rita Hayworth and Judy Holliday, a discussion of Columbia's unique brands of screwball comedy and film noir, and analyses of such classics as *The Awful Truth*, *Born Yesterday*, *From Here to Eternity*, *On the Waterfront*, *Anatomy of a Murder*, *Easy Rider*, *Taxi Driver*, *The Big Chill*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, and *The Last Emperor*. Amply illustrated with film stills and photos of stars and studio heads, Columbia Pictures includes a brief chronology and a complete 1920-1991 filmography. Designed for both the film lover and the film scholar, the book is ideal for film history courses.

"For anyone seeking a frank, readable history of the movie business, this 'Portrait of a Studio' sheds light on one part of a frenzied, fractious industry." *New York Times Book* "An excellent reading experience for movie buffs and historians." *West Coast of Books*