



I Thought We Were Making Movies, Not History (Wisconsin Film Studies)

By Walter Mirisch

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I Thought We Were Making Movies, Not History (Wisconsin Film Studies)

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This is a moving, star-filled account of one of Hollywood's true golden ages as told by a man in the middle of it all. Walter Mirisch's company has produced some of the most entertaining and enduring classics in film history, including *West Side Story*, *Some Like It Hot*, *In the Heat of the Night*, and *The Magnificent Seven*. His work has led to 87 Academy Award nominations and 28 Oscars. Richly illustrated with rare photographs from his personal collection, *I Thought We Were Making Movies, Not History* reveals Mirisch's own experience of Hollywood and tells the stories of the stars—emerging and established—who appeared in his films, including Natalie Wood, John Wayne, Peter Sellers, Sidney Poitier, Steve McQueen, Marilyn Monroe, and many others.

With hard-won insight and gentle humor, Mirisch recounts how he witnessed the end of the studio system, the development of independent production, and the rise and fall of some of Hollywood's most gifted (and notorious) cultural icons. A producer with a passion for creative excellence, he offers insights into his innovative filmmaking process, revealing a rare ingenuity for placating the demands of auteur directors, weak-kneed studio executives, and troubled screen sirens.

From his early start as a movie theater usher to the presentation of such masterpieces as *The Apartment*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *The Great Escape*, Mirisch tells the inspiring life story of his climb to the highest echelon of the American film industry. This book assures Mirisch's legacy—as Elmore Leonard puts it—as “one of the good guys.”

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Editorial Review

Review

“Walter Mirisch’s love of movies led him to make some of the best films that the industry has produced. Whether as producer or as an executive of one of the best production companies in town, he has seen it all and now can tell it all to you from his own fiercely independent perspective.”—Steven Spielberg

“From *Bomba, the Jungle Boy* to *Some Like It Hot* and *In the Heat of the Night* . . . Walter Mirisch produced many of the films which dazzled and inspired me (and I’m not kidding about *Bomba*. I loved those movies as a kid.) When I later acted in one of his (lesser) productions, *The Spikes Gang*, I learned that a prolific and brilliant producer could also be a terrific guy and a wonderful teacher. No surprise then that Walter has given us a wise and utterly engrossing look at his life . . . and extraordinary experiences in this film business.”—Ron Howard

“Walter Mirisch has written the quintessential behind-the-scenes book on the glory days of Hollywood. If you ever wanted to know everything there was to know, this will surely be touted as a ‘bible’ of our industry—for Walter tells it as it really was, with the integrity for which he is known and loved. It is an engaging story; insightful and entertaining, poignant with personal anecdotes.”—Julie Andrews and Blake Edwards

“Quite a read. . . . In Mirisch’s moving, candid, star-filled memoir—illustrated with rare photos from his personal collection—he tells a lifetime’s worth of astounding stories about how movies get made and shares his hard-won insight with gentle humor.”—*On Wisconsin*

About the Author

Walter Mirisch is the producer, in whole or in part, of more than one hundred films. Among his company’s honors are three Oscars for best picture—*The Apartment* (1960), *West Side Story* (1961), and *In the Heat of the Night* (1967). Mirisch has also received two honorary Academy Awards, the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award (1977) and the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award (1983); and has been honored with the Cecil B. DeMille Award (1977) presented by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association and the David O. Selznick Lifetime Achievement Award in Theatrical Motion Pictures (1995) presented by the Producers Guild of America. He has been decorated by the Republic of France with its Order of Arts and Letters, has received an honorary doctorate in Humane Letters from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and is a recipient of the UCLA Medal, that university’s highest award. Mirisch served three terms as president of the Producers Guild of America and four terms as president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

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“Legendary producer, visionary filmmaker, courageous seeker of truth, especially in troubling times.”—Sidney Poitier, from the foreword

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Lena Robertson:

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William Lebel:

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