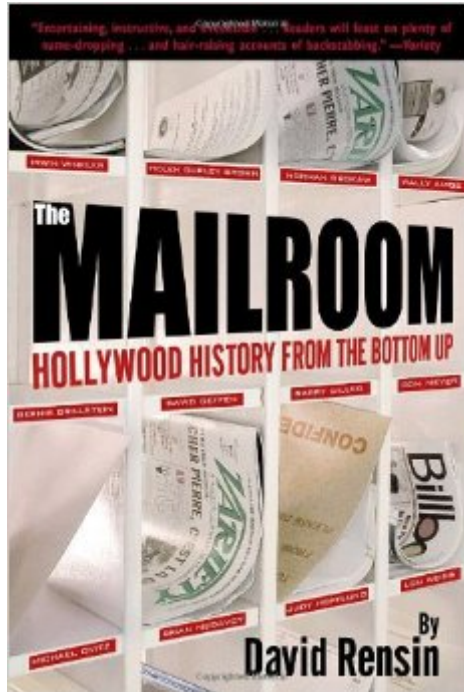


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# The Mailroom: Hollywood History From The Bottom Up



## Synopsis

Itâ™s like a plot from a Hollywood potboiler: start out in the mailroom, end up a mogul. But for many, it happens to be true. Some of the biggest names in entertainmentâ”including David Geffen, Barry Diller, and Michael Ovitzâ” started their dazzling careers in the lowly mailroom. Based on more than two hundred interviews, David Rensin unfolds the never-before-told history of an American institutionâ”in the voices of the people who lived it. Through nearly seven decades of glamour and humiliation, lousy pay and incredible perks, killer egos and a kill-or-be-killed ethos, youâ™ll go where the trainees go, learn what they must do to get ahead, and hear the best insider stories from the Hollywood everyone knows about but no one really knows. A vibrant tapestry of dreams, desire, and exploitation, *The Mailroom* is not only an engrossing read but a crash course, taught by the experts, on how to succeed in Hollywood.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Rensin (coauthor, *Don't Stand Too Close to a Naked Man*) captures the ambition, manipulative plotting and hustler mentality of a few Hollywood mailroom employees in this series of raunchy, realistic interviews with some top agents who started out in the mailroom. As with any entry-level gig, "the hours are long, the pay... abysmal." Star mailroom grads from the William Morris Agency, Creative Artists Agency, ICM and others voice conflicting views, making Rensin's book an uncompromisingly truthful tell-all of what it takes to make it in the movie biz. William Morris's Norman Brokaw recalls, "I made it a point to develop relationships early on," while Bernie Brillstein's a bit more blunt: "I kissed ass." Most of the agents admit opening up private correspondence and

packages, insisting, "everybody did it." Rensin also exposes affairs with secretaries to learn company secrets, fights over use of phones that led to wrestling matches, and homophobia. Sam Haskell, William Morris's worldwide head of television, offers a different take: "Your primary power is your character and your integrity." Rensin furnishes fresh anecdotes about an embarrassed novice who didn't recognize Judy Garland, or another who believed in Marilyn Monroe despite a casting specialist calling her "just another blonde." Clashing views of Mike Ovitz, from "a superb leader" to someone who preferred "style over content" and to whom "appearances were everything," help explain Ovitz's meteoric rise and massive collapse. Most notably, Rensin shows that the road from mailroom to mogul is a rough one. The stories are amusing, intriguing and sometimes horrifying, but Rensin, to his credit, never dilutes sordid details. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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Rensin's upward-mobility saga suggests that aspiring Hollywood conquistadors should start in the mailroom of a talent agency instead of hanging around soda fountains in tight sweaters, waiting to be discovered, or essaying other such fabled, fame-and-fortune-seeking ploys. Focusing on the cesspools of power behind the stars--the William Morris Agency, Creative Artists Agency, and lesser stokers of the dream machine--Rensin outlines the path to real power in filmdom by relaying the personal stories and reminiscences of the back-channel operatives who wield it. He reveals no shortages of backbiting, antisocial behavior, and power politics in the mailroom, though the place lacks the glamour usually gleaned to gild such showbiz exposes. Do readers dig the dirt on the David Geffens and Barry Dillers of the world as much as that on the Winona Ryders and Mickey Rourkes? Well, if they're money minded, they ought to. The goods Rensin's got on the likes of Michael Ovitz makes his ilk as exciting as the stars an Ovitz lucratively manipulates. Mike Tribby

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