



High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood (Texas Film Studies Series)

Justin Wyatt

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Steven Spielberg once said, "I like ideas, especially movie ideas, that you can hold in your hand. If a person can tell me the idea in twenty-five words or less, it's going to make a pretty good movie." Spielberg's comment embodies the essence of the high concept film, which can be condensed into one simple sentence that inspires marketing campaigns, lures audiences, and separates success from failure at the box office.

This pioneering study explores the development and dominance of the high concept movie within commercial Hollywood filmmaking since the late 1970s. Justin Wyatt describes how box office success, always important in Hollywood, became paramount in the era in which major film studios passed into the hands of media conglomerates concerned more with the economics of filmmaking than aesthetics. In particular, he shows how high concept films became fully integrated with their marketing, so that a single phrase ("Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water...") could sell the movie to studio executives and provide copy for massive advertising campaigns; a single image or a theme song could instantly remind potential audience members of the movie, and tie-in merchandise could generate millions of dollars in additional income.



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