

Isn't transmedia just franchising?

Today...

- Exploring the history of transmedia storytelling
- Understand the rise of transmedia franchises
- Industrial history in the USA
 - 1920s franchise culture
 - 1980s synergy
 - 1990s high concept
 - 2000s transmedia franchise

Learning Objectives

- EXPLAIN the influence of historical franchising developments on historical transmedia
- DESCRIBE the shifts in Hollywood branding
- ANALYSE the lines between creativity and commerce in today's transmedia franchises

So, first things first...

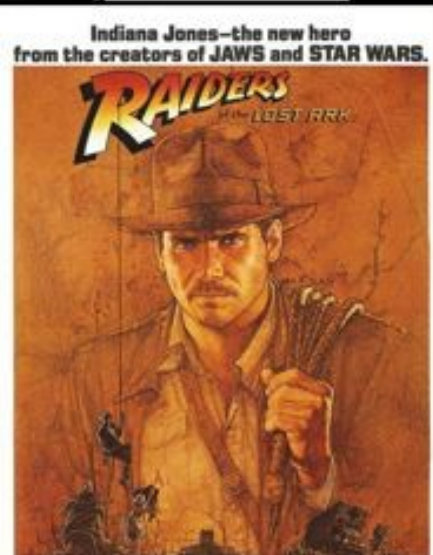
- Let's think about the following:
 - **WHAT IS A FRANCHISE FILM?**
 - What type of film or filmmaking style does this term bring to mind?
 - What examples can you think of?
 - Do you associate franchise with certain genres, styles, countries, etc.?



POWER CAN BE HELD
IN THE SMALLEST OF THINGS

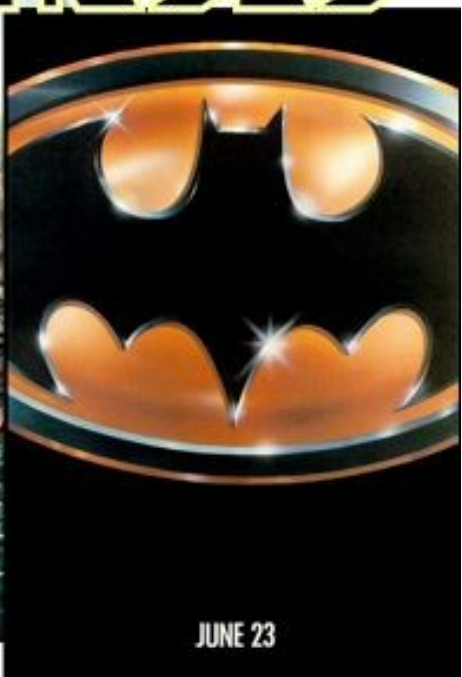
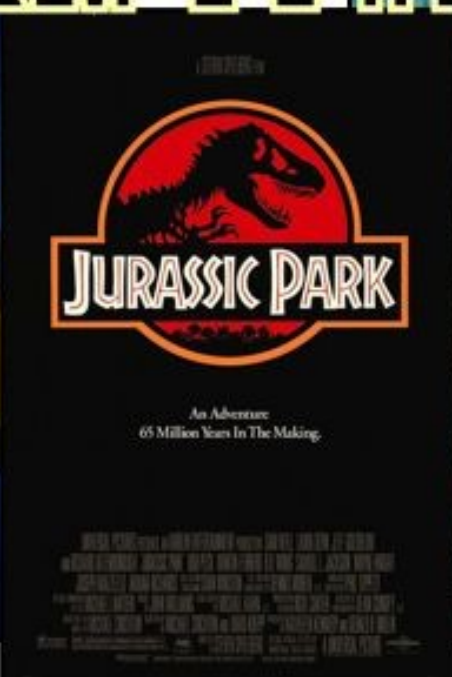


STAR WARS



USE NET DES

BEST FILM FRANCHISES



JUNE 23

- We may associate 'franchise' with:
 - American cinema?
 - Big budget blockbusters?
 - Commercial films?
 - 'Popular' or mass-market films, e.g. superheroes?
 - Sequels/prequels/remakes?
 - Merchandise? Spin-offs?
 - Brands and logos?

Academic definitions...

- A film franchise is defined according to its ‘production and distribution of multiple revenue streams...’ (Johnson 2013)
- A film franchise ‘consists of cross-marketing across more than one medium. For the owners, the goal of increasing profit through diversity can extend the commercial profitability of the franchise.’ (Lemke 2004)

So then...

- Franchise films become tied up with:
 - COMMERCIALISM (economic motive)
 - REPLICATION (make more of it)
 - MULTIPLICITY (make extensions from it)

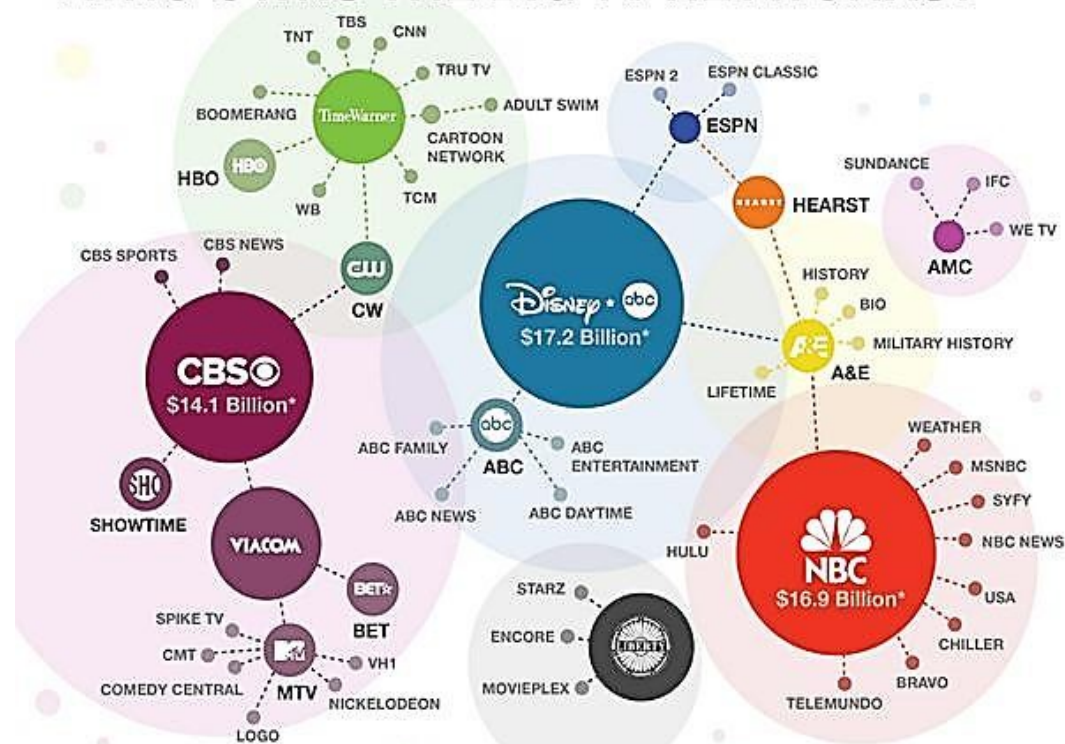
So film franchises aren't really about just films...?

- “Movies are now no longer free-standing intellectual property; they are one piece in a marketing assault.”
- David Alpert and Rick Jacobs (2004)
- “Maximizing profits compels a strategy of crossing over across as many of these media as possible.”
- Jay Lemke (2004)

- Media convergence is “the flow of content across multiple media..., the co-operation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of audiences,” making ‘the flow of content across media inevitable.’

- Henry Jenkins (2006)

WHO OWNS THE BIG TV NETWORKS?





A TimeWarner Company

THE MATRIX



'The Matrix is franchise entertainment for the age of media convergence...'
(Jenkins 2006)

Yes, but...

- Wasn't *The Matrix* celebrated for its creativity, artistry, intelligence, technological innovation?
- In other words, we shouldn't necessarily separate 'commercial' from 'creative' when thinking about transmedia franchises...

Franchise as creativity...?

Transmediality:

- “The increasingly popular industrial practice of using multiple media platforms to present information concerning a single fictional world through a range of textual forms.” Elizabeth Evans (2011)

So then...

- Film franchises are essentially about:
- Producing multiple revenue streams from the same product/intellectual property
- Variation on sameness (sequels, etc.)
- Cross-marketing/branding (corporate synergy)
- Boosting commercial profits via creative extension across products and platforms (e.g. storytelling, world-building, toys, games, apps, etc.)
 - *But what are the implications of this – and where did this all come from anyway???*

Media or McDonald's?

- 'Calling something a "franchise" is not a neutral declaration: it prompts us to think about the media in the same terms that we think about McDonald's.' (Johnson 2013)
- But what are the implications of thinking about media as mass-Production, as mass consumption, as 'shopping' or as pure consumerism?



Industry borrowings?

- Film franchises involve “a migration to the media industries of market logics from other business sectors.”
- (Johnson 2013)

In other words...

- Understanding the transmedia franchise means understanding its **production context**...
- ... It is **not** about CGI, superheroes, genre, etc.
- And understanding the production context means understanding the historical context!

1918 was the rise of licensing...Licensing afforded franchising!

- A franchise is an agreement between stakeholders – a franchisor who develops the system and a franchisee who invests in that system: ‘The franchisor ... attempts to create public recognition of the franchised outlets. The franchisee, following the merchandising and business procedures outlined by the franchisor, proceeds to operate as an independent establishment.’ David J. Swartz

Licensing afforded franchising... but not yet of media!

- In the 1900s, franchising was first a phenomenon of transportation sectors, used for extending roads, tram lines, and railways across the country.
- ‘Bids will be opened for the purchase of the Eleventh-street electric railway franchise ... The franchise purchaser will connect with the Main-street line of the Los Angeles Railway Company and if built the road will be operated by that purchaser.’
(*Los Angeles Times*, May 1904)

Licensing afforded franchising... but not yet of media!

- In the 1920s, underpinned by licensing laws, franchising spread to the retail industry:
- Fredericks, a hair salon franchise, warned its customers in one advert that ‘not all permanent waves are Fredericks Permanent Waves. To be sure of getting a true Fredericks Permanent Wave, patronize an authorized Fredericks shop. Look for the Fredericks Franchise Certificate, guaranteeing the use of a Fredericks machine.’



Edgar Rice Burroughs

“Since those simple days of twenty years ago, when I blithely gave away a fortune in rights that I did not know existed, many changes have taken place, bringing new rights with them. Today I am closing a radio contract covering the presentation of my stories over the air. What a far cry from second magazine rights.”

“Perhaps in my radio contract I shall insist upon the reservation to me of the interplanetary rights. Why not? Radio rights and sound and dialog rights would have seemed as preposterous twenty years ago.”

- Edgar Rice Burroughs, “Protecting the Author’s Rights,”
The Writer’s 1932 Year Book & Market Guide

Summary so far...

Historically, franchising was born out of:

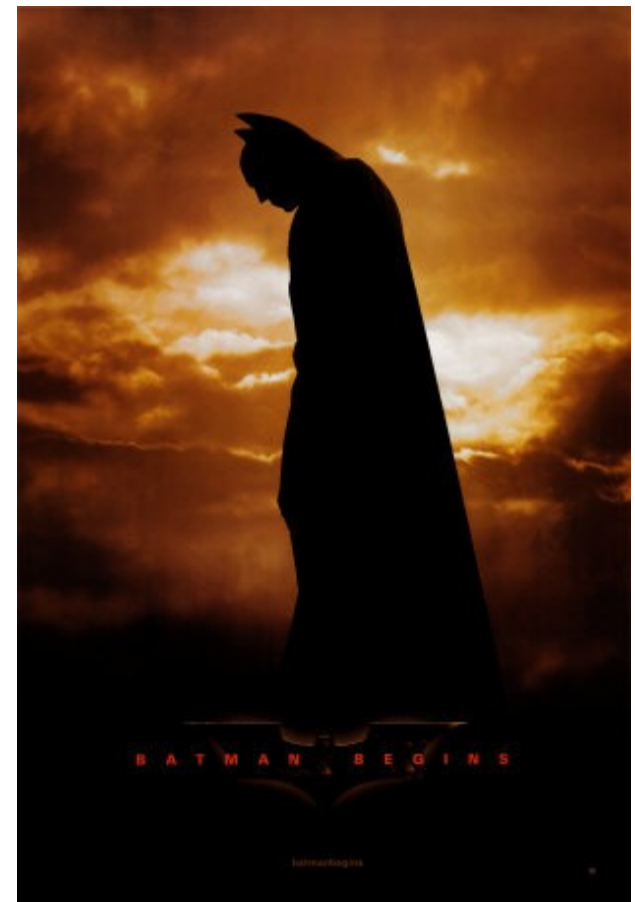
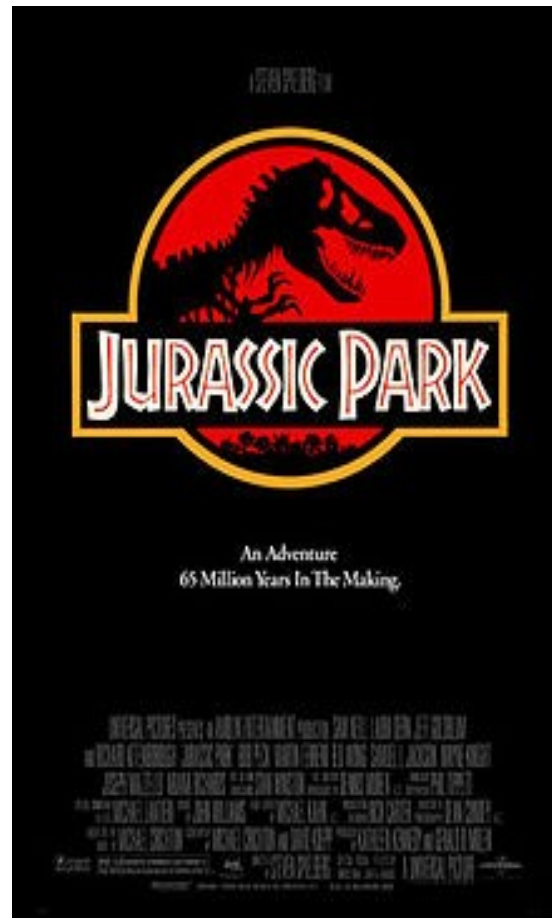
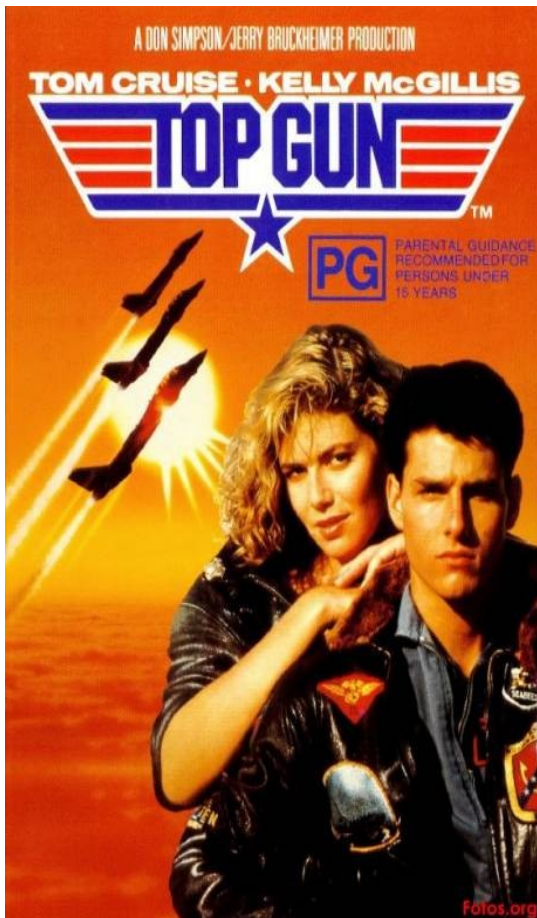
- Industrialisation
- Mass production
- Consumer culture
- Rail road extensions
- Shop extensions

And this all explains why...

- We associate 'franchise' with:
 - American cinema? – *American culture*
 - Big budget blockbusters? – *consumerism*
 - Commercial films? – *shops/shopping*
 - 'Popular' or mass-market films, e.g. superheroes? – *Mass marketing*
 - Sequels? – *replication of same product*
 - Merchandise? – *licensed toys/brands*

Moving things forward...

Brand Hollywood in the Late 20th Century



Now then. . .

Characterising Hollywood as transmedia franchise production:

- Economics of cinema for a global audience
- Standardization of Hollywood films
- Shift towards the production of 'product' over 'film'
- Merchandising and mass-markets as global cinema
- High concept and the integration of 'film' and 'marketing'
- Imbalance of 'art' and 'commerce' – does contemporary Hollywood encompass a shift towards the latter???

Film merchandise I own . . .



Top 10 highest grossing films of all time:

1. *Avatar* (2009)
2. *Titanic* (1997)
3. *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015)
4. *Jurassic World* (2015)
5. *Avengers Assemble* (2012)
6. *Fast and Furious 7* (2013)
7. *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015)
8. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part II* (2011)
9. *Frozen* (2013)
10. *Iron Man 3* (2013)
11. *Minions* (2015)
12. *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003)
13. *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* (2011)
14. *Skyfall* (2012)
15. *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (2014)

WHAT DO THESE FILMS HAVE IN COMMON...?

- Sequels!
- Known brands... that exist *outside* of the medium of film, e.g. based on comics, toys, rides, etc.
- Standardized formulas
- Globally resonant stories, e.g. historical events, fantasy/sci-fi, superheroes, dinosaurs, aliens, etc.

So then...

- Two themes emerge:
- Hollywood as a global producer of
 - Standardized products
 - Filmed entertainment, not just films

But where did these themes come from??

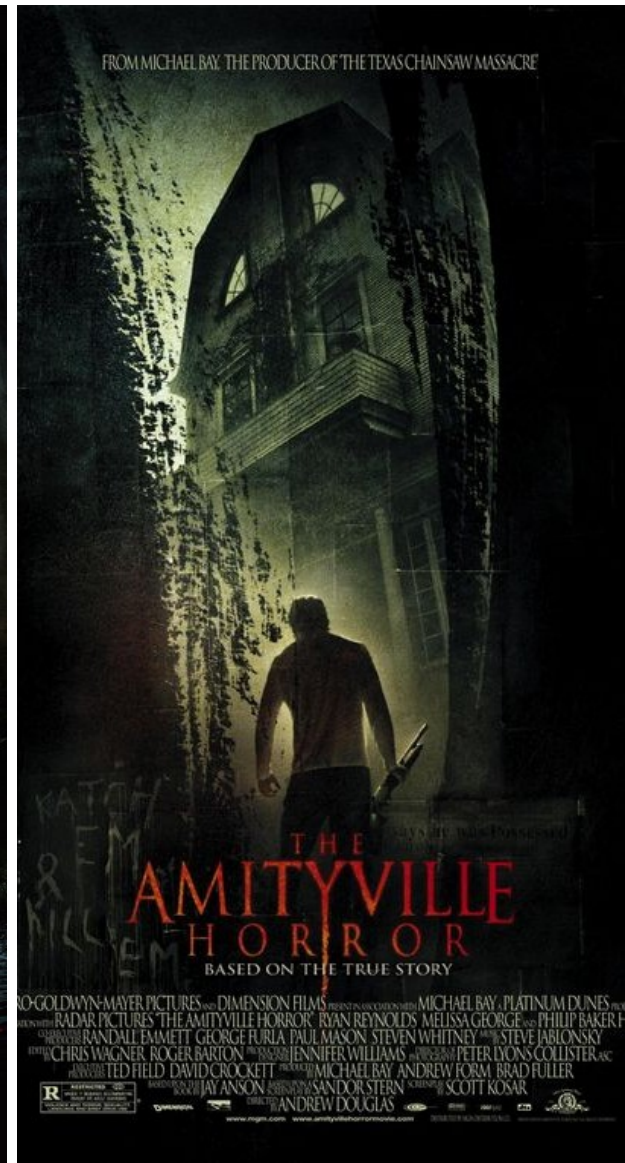


Theodor Adorno





Standardization in film



Standardization across media?



THE
MATRIX



The Studio System: 'Dream Factory'

- **standardization of the production process**
(production routines, rules for shooting and editing, division of labour to create efficient industrial enterprise)
- **differentiation of the product**
(use of stars, genres, directors, technology to direct the consumer's attention to the originality and production values of the feature product)

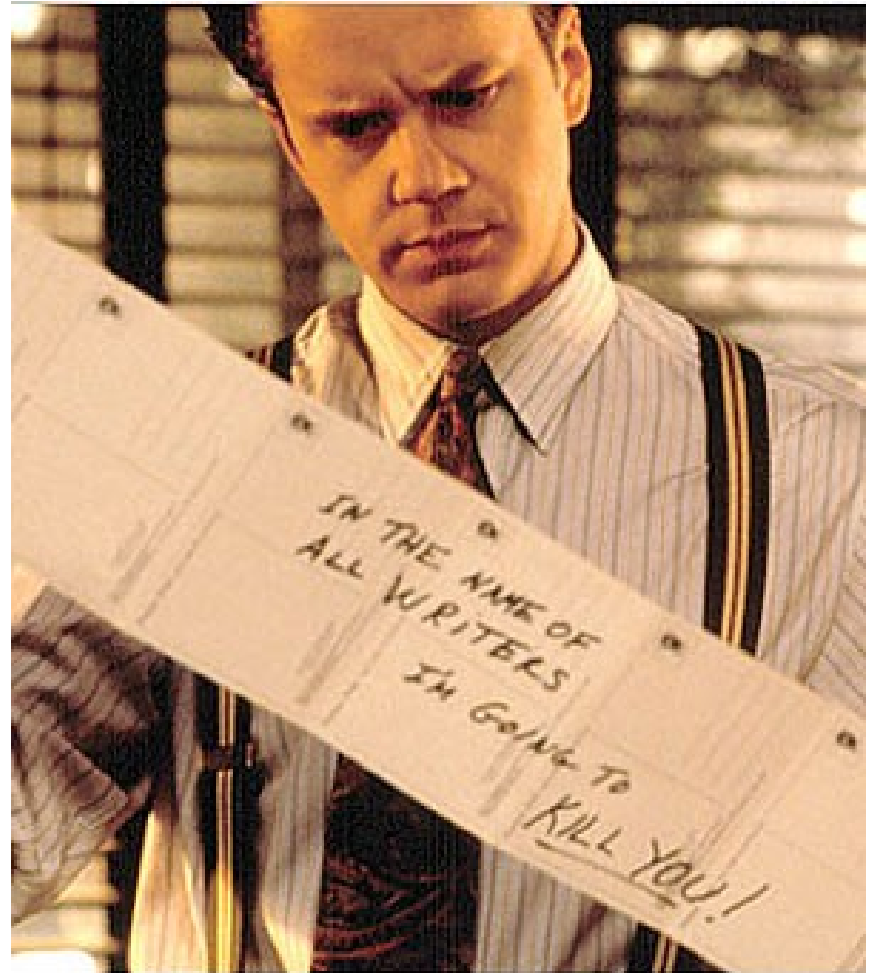


Top Hat (1935): Classical Style



Contemporary Hollywood

- **Package-unit production** - films are proposed and financed as individual packages (put together by agents) that have to be pitched and sold to investors, as well as to audiences.
- **Market research** – increasingly used as a means of identifying profitable market segments.
- **Conglomeration** - studios are part of larger entertainment companies where film increasingly functions as a basis for ‘synergy’ and ‘transmedia’



In the 1980s, the film industry and its product underwent a substantial and far-reaching transformation whose implications were still being worked out a decade later, but whose impetus and whose basic alteration of the industry had become clear by the decade's end.

As a result of these transformations, Hollywood ceased operating as a film industry, and film stopped being its primary product. Instead of making films, the industry shifted to the production of filmed entertainment, a quite different enterprise that encompassed production and distribution of entertainment in a variety of markets and media.

Stephen Prince, *A New Pot of Gold* (Berkeley: California UP 2000), p. xi



Chicken or the egg...?

- Film leads to commerce?
- Or commerce leads to film?



Viacom's core holdings



Entertainment

- Paramount Pictures , Paramount Classics, Paramount Home Entertainment, United Cinema International (UCI)

Cable

- MTV Networks, Showtime Networks, Bet Networks, Nickelodeon, Comedy Central . . .

Television

- CBS Network, UPN Network, numerous TV stations and television production companies . . .

Video

- Blockbuster video stores

Publishing

- Simon & Schuster, Scribner . . .

Radio

- Infinity Radio, CBS Radio Network . . .

The turn to 'high concept' in Hollywood...

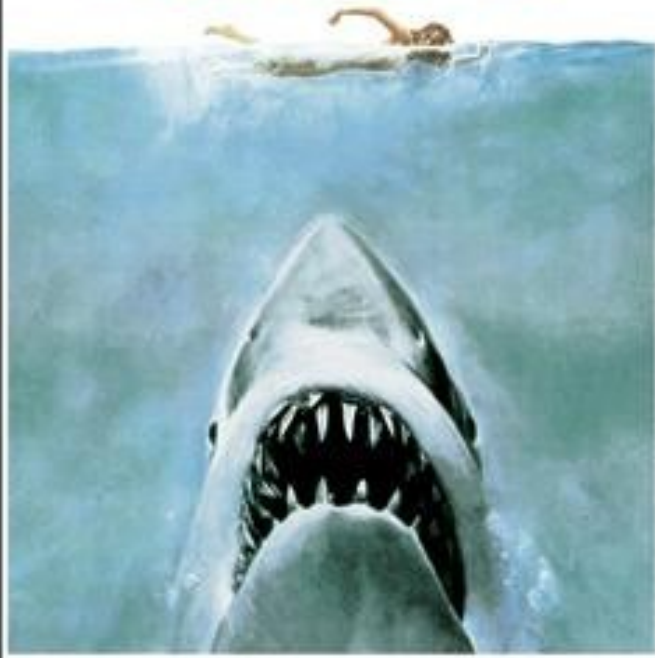
- The simplification of cinema?
- Or the formula for commercially successful transmedia stories?

‘High concept can be conceived as a product differentiated through the emphasis on style in production and through the integration of the film with its marketing. This definition encompasses several aspects of high concept; to gather these aspects together in an appropriately high concept fashion, one can think of high concept as comprising “the look, the hook and the book.” The look of the images, the marketing hooks, and the reduced narratives form the cornerstone of high concept’

Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (Austin: University of Texas Press), pp. 21-22.

*The terrifying motion picture
from the terrifying No.1 best seller.*

JAWS



ROY SCHEIDER ROBERT SHAW RICHARD DREYFUSS

JAWS

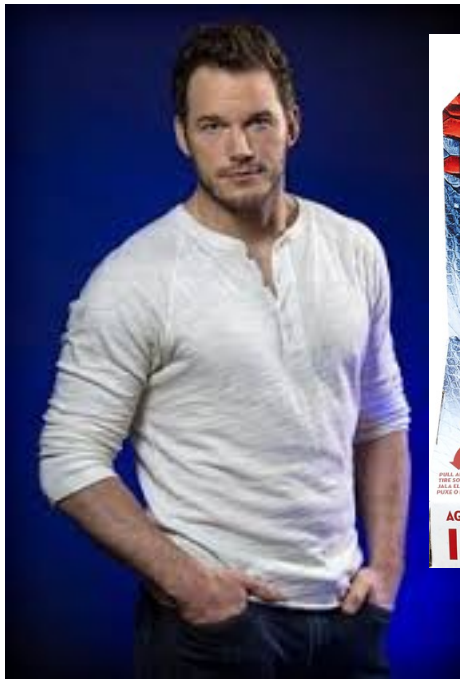
Co-starring LORRAINE GARY - MURRAY HAMILTON - A ZANUCK/BROWN PRODUCTION
Screenplay by PETER BENCHLEY and CARL GOTTLIEB - Based on the novel by PETER BENCHLEY - Music by JOHN WILLIAMS
Directed by STEVEN SPIELBERG - Produced by RICHARD D. ZANUCK and DAVID BROWN - A UNIVERSAL PICTURE -
TECHNICOLOR® PANAVISION® PG PARENTAL STRONG CAUTION MAY BE TOO INTENSE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

High concept

- The look
- The hook
- The book

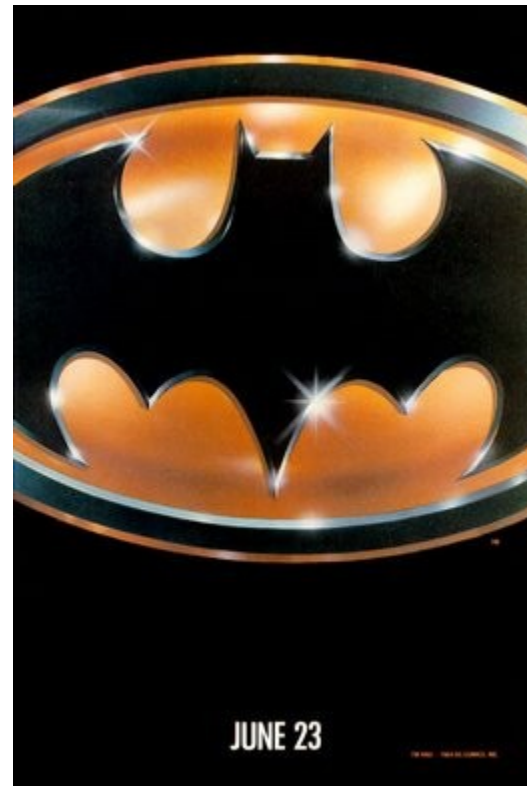
The aesthetics of High concept

- Marketing conventions are inscribed into the expressive quality of the film – this effects a film’s visual and graphic look, its use of stars and music, and its development of character and genre



The aesthetics of High concept

- High concept film is defined by a degree of 'excess' – moments that seem excessive to the story's development and that are motivated by commercial interests. Excess stands out, according to Wyatt, when there is "a gap in the artistic motivation of the work".



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUqGwnAolSs>

From high concept to transmedia franchise

High concept as period:

'I hope that this period would not be dismissed as unproductive or stale. Instead, the period offers a chance to examine a specific instance in which the balance between commerce and art in American film tilted strongly towards economics, influencing the construction and market for film'

Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (Austin: University of Texas Press), p. 202



What to take away from today...

- Franchises emerged out of a very **American** culture – consumer culture, branding, advertising, mass media, mass production (i.e. standardized assembly line)
- Franchised brand media developed from the world of **business**, leading to integration of filmmaking and marketing in Hollywood – rise of giant conglomerates
- It requires the corporate act of **licensing**
- Brand franchises are characterized by **multiplicity** (e.g. merchandise) and **extension** (e.g. sequels) often in the name of **commerce** (known stories travel across media)
- But franchises do require much **creative strategy**
- Despite its history, brand media franchising is ideally suited to the **convergence structure** of the 21st century

What's coming up next?

- Screening:
 - *The Greatest Movie Ever Sold* (2011)

What's coming up tomorrow...?

- Lecture 5:

‘Transmedia Futures Part 1: Digital Participation’

- Lecture 6:

‘Transmedia Futures Part 2: Global Perspectives’