

Trophy Directors, Cocktail Producers and Lifestyle Filmmakers

by James A. Barry & Martin Denham

Part 3 - Cocktail Producers

For just about every director, writer or filmmaker out there, the one thing they need to move their career forward is the most elusive of creatures... a mythical unicorn with a magic wand... a producer. This is the person who 'will make it happen' if only they could just meet them, because the producer represents the one thing, they all need but can't access themselves – MONEY. Well that's what they believe, but the reality is producers aren't a cash machine ready to pay out if you type in the right PIN number.



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Producers are filmmakers too, and they want to make a good film just as much as anyone else... well a genuine producer does. However, the bars, restaurant's, coffee shops and industry events of the world are full of producers who want to live a life of glamour, fast cars, yachts and martinis with Hollywood actors. These are 'cocktail producers'. They have little to no filmmaking expertise and know nothing about scripts, but will happily spin you a lie to grab your cash.

Legendary producer Robert Evans was the vice president of production for Paramount Pictures in the late sixties and seventies. Before that he was an actor, "a bad one", in his own words and worked with his brother in New York in the fashion business, in particular, women's slacks. He was spotted by Irwin Thalberg's widow Norma Shearer, to play the part of her late husband in 'Man Of A Thousand Faces'. After a few more acting roles he became disillusioned and set his sights on being a producer. A smart move in buying the rights to the novel 'The Detective' by Roderick Thorp led Evans to the top job at Paramount.

Within seven years, he took Paramount from ninth place to first and issued the Second Golden Age of Hollywood.

As Vice President of Production, Evans oversaw: [The President's Analyst](#) (1967), [Barefoot in the Park](#) (1967), [The Odd Couple](#) (1968), [The Detective](#) (1968), [Rosemary's Baby](#) (1968), [The Italian Job](#) (1969), [True Grit](#) (1969), [The Confession](#) (1970), [Love Story](#) (1970), [A New Leaf](#) (1971), [Plaza Suite](#) (1971), [Harold and Maude](#) (1971), [The Godfather](#) (1972), [Serpico](#) (1973), [Save the Tiger](#) (1973), [The Great Gatsby](#) (1974) and [The Conversation](#) (1974).

As an independent producer, Evans made: [Chinatown](#) (1974), [Marathon Man](#) (1976), [Black Sunday](#) (1977), [Players](#) (1979), [Urban Cowboy](#) (1980), [Popeye](#) (1980), [The Cotton Club](#) (1984), [The Two Jakes](#) (1990), [Sliver](#) (1993), [Jade](#) (1995), [The Phantom](#) (1996), [The Saint](#) (1997), [The Out-of-Towners](#) (1999) and [How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days](#) (2003).

Robert was acutely aware that "legit producers are few, dying breed", as he puts it. To quote from his best-selling book "The Kid Stays In The Picture":

"There are many "cocktail party" producers. ... None of these guys have the vaguest notion of budget, casting, pre-production, production, post-production, final edit, final theatre selection, advertising, marketing, and collecting the "dough-ray-me". Those are just a few of the many facets a legit producer is responsible for."

Evans further discusses the input that a producer has to put into a film:

"An actor gives twelve weeks to a flick; a director, at most a year; a producer, rarely less than three to five years."

That is a producer.

FINAL WORD

Storytelling through film is a very special thing. Not only is it a great source of entertainment, it can enrich people's lives. It can change attitudes. It can draw attention to much needed topics of discussion. It can thrill us, frighten us, excite us, make us cry or make us laugh. Film is important and filmmaking shouldn't be wasted on those who don't respect the power storytelling has to make a difference.

Audiences deserve better films to watch, and investors need better projects to invest in.

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