

once again become a genuine mass medium, and an important driving force in the entertainment industry.

In conclusion, then, this book has offered a new perspective on the period 1967–76 in American cinema, a decade which saw the theatrical release of over 2000 American-financed films in the US (plus roughly the same amount of foreign-financed films; Finler 2003: 367). From this vast corpus, using an inflation-adjusted box office chart, I selected a small group of breakaway hits, demonstrating the centrality of these films for the film industry and its audiences, and establishing their distinctive thematic concerns by comparing them with the superhits of the decades preceding and following the New Hollywood. This comparison revealed significant thematic shifts between the three sets of superhits, which also could be found across the annual top ten lists. Notwithstanding the incredible diversity of the overall output of the American film industry, from the Roadshow Era to the New Hollywood the thematic emphasis of hit movies shifted from key developments in Western history to the social divisions of contemporary America and the operations of its main institutions, from foreign nations and nationalities to American ethnicities and race relations, from family-friendly representations to graphic displays of sex and violence.

I offered an explanation for these thematic shifts by examining the dynamic interplay between the output of the American film industry and the composition and preferences of cinema audiences in the US, which can be approximated with the help of audience surveys conducted at the time. This examination revealed that in the late 1960s and early 1970s overall industry output was in line with some audience preferences (especially those of male youth), but not others. In particular, ongoing preferences for traditional family-oriented musicals and historical epics, which continued to be immensely popular on television and in audience surveys in the 1970s, were no longer serviced in cinemas during the first half of the decade, and the objections of many people to, among other things, high levels of sex and violence were disregarded. As a result, large segments of the American population (notably women and older people) were alienated from the cinemagoing experience, some only temporarily, others permanently. Hence, it is not the case that Hollywood always gives the people what they want. However, ignoring the concerns and preferences of large population segments is clearly detrimental to the industry's long-term

financial health, and it could therefore be expected that efforts would soon be made to overcome the alienation of those segments, as indeed they were with increasing success after 1972.

In order to explain Hollywood's bias and the polarised responses of various audience segments in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I examined a number of developments in the American entertainment industry and in American society at large. Assuming, as most film historians do, that there is some relationship between changes in films and changes in society at large, I used opinion polls as a measure of key aspects of social, cultural and political change. I argued that, across the 1960s and 1970s, public opinion in the US became ever more polarised, with youth being at the forefront of liberalisation, and older people often being left behind (although on the whole their attitudes were slowly becoming more liberal as well). The relationship between the thematic concerns of hit movies and the outlook of the increasingly liberal youth audience was by no means straightforward. Hit movies were in line with some liberal attitudes (notably about sex, race, ethnicity, foreign policy and the shortcomings of the social, political and economic order), but ignored, even reversed others (notably about gender equality). Furthermore, it has to be emphasised that for more liberal movies to be made in the first place, the film industry had to change so as to make it more responsive to, and potentially even an engine of, social change. I argued that the integration, or transformation, of film companies into corporations operating across a range of media, and indeed across a range of industries, disrupted their long-established hierarchies and traditional ways of doing business (most notably the implementation of the Production Code). This disruption created opportunities for new generations of film executives and filmmakers, often with a politically and culturally liberal outlook, and for the quick adoption of (thematic) innovations in television, publishing and popular music. The hits of the New Hollywood arose from the interplay between such changes in the film industry and the liberalisation of American society.

Finally, I want to suggest that the integrated analysis of hit patterns, film industrial developments and social change offered in this study with respect to the New Hollywood can be applied to other periods of change in American film history. As this conclusion has demonstrated, another obvious candidate for such an analysis is the transformation of American cinema in the late 1970s. But this requires, I think, another book.