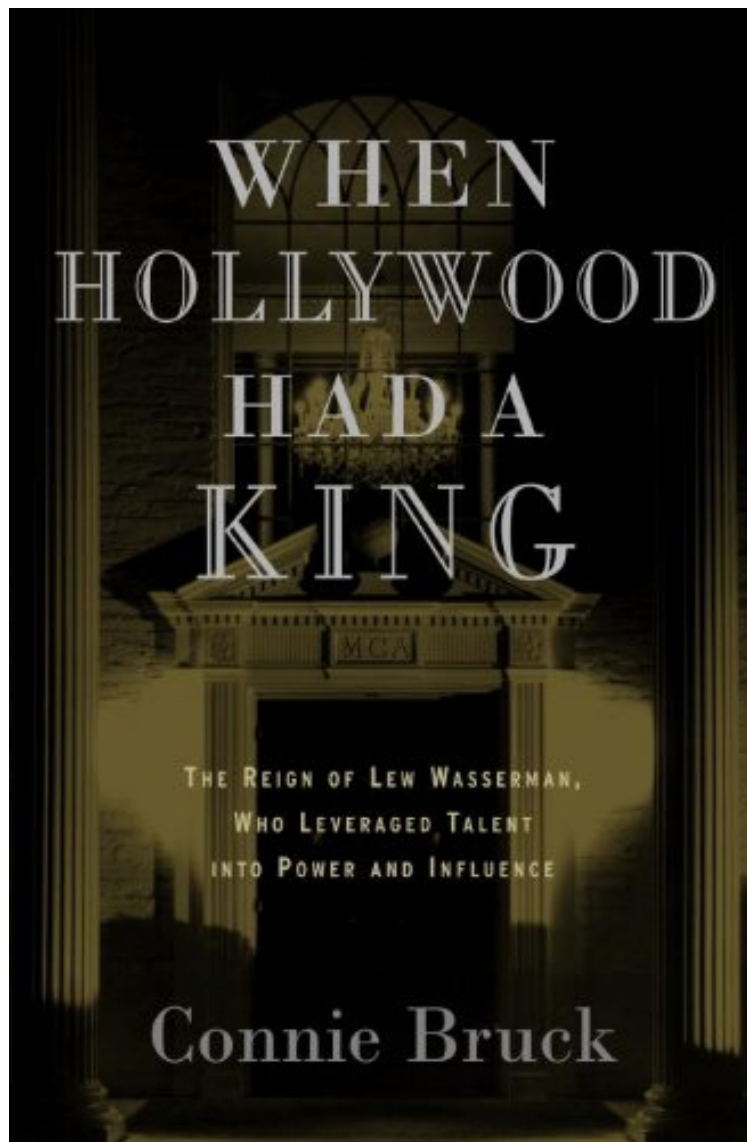


(Library ebook) When Hollywood Had a King: The Reign of Lew Wasserman, Who Leveraged Talent into Power and Influence

When Hollywood Had a King: The Reign of Lew Wasserman, Who Leveraged Talent into Power and Influence

Connie Bruck

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Connie Bruck : When Hollywood Had a King: The Reign of Lew Wasserman, Who Leveraged Talent into Power and Influence before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised When Hollywood Had a King: The Reign of Lew Wasserman, Who Leveraged Talent into Power and Influence:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Better than fiction, an engaging drama of business history.By

Diverse Connie Bruck is a masterful biographer, one of the best. Her books read like political thrillers. She has multiple threads keeping the plot moving, and each thread reveals important information about the character. She outwrites most fiction thriller writers. "When Hollywood had a king" kept me riveted to my audiobook the entire time. Basically, Lew Wasserman is a constantly scheming, completely self-centered, with no interests except business dealings and enlarging his fortune. Bruck portrays him as a crass, nouveau rich executive. He and his wife held parties, and only include those with the right social status. Yet they themselves come from lower-middle class backgrounds. Wasserman is ruthless in his dealings with everyone, both other business executives and his employees. This man is the epitome of the ugly businessman. Bruck does a spectacular job of showing how the origins of the Talent Agent business that Wasserman started in had mafia ties. Wasserman continued to use the Mafia practices of intimidation, fear and punishment in all his business dealings, a true shark suit. If you worked at MCA and quit, it was viewed as an act of betrayal, and Wasserman would do his best to impede your career. Bruck shows how Wasserman kept you in your place, giving you small rewards for doing as he said, and big punishments for doing what was best for you. The book shows how JFK Bobby Kennedy were influenced to make the anti-trust changes light the year they spun off the MCA talent agency business. Wasserman chose this division to spin off, then just fired all the employees who were loyal to him for 20+ years; no pension, no nothing. That was the kind of guy he was. Do what he wants and you're 'part of the family'. But he doesn't help you when it doesn't benefit him. I can't imagine a work of fiction being more engaging than this book. Plus, when you're done, you have a good understanding of the whole Hollywood business scene, and how projects (movies) get done in Hollywood. Wasserman was a talented business guy, no doubt. But in his brand of business, other humans have no meaning except how they benefit you. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Bruck at her best. By a reader I had high expectations for this work after reading 'Predators' Ball' and 'Master of the Game.' I was not disappointed. It's a stunning portrait of a legendary Hollywood mogul and his genius for cultivating unparalleled power and influence. Though nonfiction, it's a narrative worthy of the best fiction. The saga begins in 1922 with future MCA founder Julius Caesar Stein and union heavyweight James Caesar Petrillo in mob-ruled Chicago. It ends 80 years later with Wasserman's death (slightly past his prime) in Hollywood. It's a story of timely innovation - in performance bookings, agency representation, studio production, television content agreements, union exclusives, tax loophole exploits, political lobbying, fundraising, influence, and leverage. Ultimately, it's the story of the 'entertainment' industry, complete with celebrities, politicians (from JFK; Nixon's history alone is worth the price of the book), and even Japanese suitors. Highly recommended. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. So So By J. Smallridge Connie Bruck does a great job in this work of showing exactly what type of man Lew Wasserman was. Through anecdotes, stories, and interviews, the author makes a rather mysterious man seem more real. Moreover, she shows how Wasserman came to be so powerful and how he expanded Hollywood's reach into Washington. Despite this, the book felt uneven and there were numerous instances when the story wandered. Although I was glad to learn more about Jules Stein and the rise of MCA, I really didn't need the endless discussions about labor relations, mergers and business deals, and various individuals hardly central to the main story. At times, there discussions felt like distractions. At 450 or pages, she could have chopped roughly 200 pages and this would have been a fascinating read. As written, it was merely an "OK" one.

In *When Hollywood Had a King*, the distinguished journalist Connie Bruck tells the sweeping story of MCA and its brilliant leader, a man who transformed the entertainment industry; businessman, politician, tactician, and visionary Lew Wasserman. The Music Corporation of America was founded in Chicago in 1924 by Dr. Jules Stein, an ophthalmologist with a gift for booking bands. Twelve years later, Stein moved his operations west to Beverly Hills and hired Lew Wasserman. From his meager beginnings as a movie-theater usher in Cleveland, Wasserman ultimately ascended to the post of president of MCA, and the company became the most powerful force in Hollywood, regarded with a mixture of fear and awe. In his signature black suit and black knit tie, Wasserman took Hollywood by storm. He shifted the balance of power from the studios; which had seven-year contractual strangleholds on the stars; to the talent, who became profit partners. When an antitrust suit forced MCA's evolution from talent agency to film- and television-production company, it was Wasserman who parlayed the control of a wide variety of entertainment and media products into a new type of Hollywood power base. There was only Washington left to conquer, and conquer it Wasserman did, quietly brokering alliances with Democratic and Republican administrations alike. That Wasserman's reach extended from the underworld to the White House only added to his mystique. Among his friends were Teamster boss Jimmy Hoffa, mob lawyer Sidney Korshak, and gangster Moe Dalitz; along with Presidents Johnson, Clinton, and especially Reagan, who enjoyed a particularly close and mutually beneficial relationship with Wasserman. He was equally intimate with Hollywood royalty, from Bette Davis and Jimmy Stewart to Steven Spielberg, who began his career at MCA and once described Wasserman's eyeglasses as looking like two giant movie screens. The history of MCA is really the history of a revolution. Lew Wasserman ushered in the Hollywood we know today. He is the link between the old-school moguls with their ironclad studio contracts and the new industry defined by multimedia conglomerates, power agents, multimillionaire actors, and profit sharing. In the hands of Connie Bruck, the story of Lew Wasserman's rise to power takes on an

almost Shakespearean scope. When *Hollywood Had a King* reveals the industry's greatest untold story: how a stealthy, enterprising power broker became, for a time, Tinseltown's absolute monarch. From the Hardcover edition.

From Publishers Weekly Until his death last year, Wasserman was one of the last survivors from the corporate side of Hollywood's golden era. Having started as an agent at MCA, he eventually became the firm's president, but not before he'd turned the talent agency into a powerful film and television studio, buying out Universal in the process. Wasserman's story is inseparable from that of MCA, and this book appropriately begins with an account of the company's founder, Jules Stein, who began booking bands from his Chicago office in 1924. This put Stein, and MCA, in contact with the local musicians' union, which then linked him to organized crime—the first of several such links the book explores. Wasserman helped shift the balance of power to Hollywood, remaining with the firm despite being widely sought after by rival agencies and movie studios. He also helped extend MCA's political influence, through extensive fund-raising and a longstanding connection with former client Ronald Reagan. New Yorker staffer Bruck (Master of the Game) is strong on Wasserman's corporate tactics, as well as later buyouts of Universal by foreign investors. But she also demonstrates extensive familiarity with the business's underside, exploring Wasserman's connections with mob lawyer Sidney Korshak, which assured a comfortable relationship between MCA and Hollywood's unions. Much more than a celebrity-studded tale, Bruck's work offers a look at the corporate machinations behind the film industry's myths. 8-page photo insert not seen by PW. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist *Starred* Lew Wasserman arrived in Hollywood in 1939 to help Jules Stein transform MCA from a band-booking company into a talent agency for movie stars. He did that and a whole lot more, as award-winning business reporter Bruck makes clear in this absolutely riveting account of power-broking in Tinseltown. Wasserman's career possesses a kind of epic symmetry: by freeing the stars of the 1940s from the servitude of studio contracts, he effectively ended the era of the movie moguls, only to become the greatest mogul of them all. But, as Bruck explains in painstaking but absorbing detail, Wasserman redefined the role of the mogul. In the days of Warner, Mayer, et al., the moguls operated their individual fiefdoms, largely independent of one another; Wasserman wanted it all, and eventually, as MCA morphed into Universal Studios, he got it—not a fiefdom but the whole empire. Television, we learn, was the key. Whereas the old guard saw TV as a threat and attempted to close ranks against it, Wasserman saw it as the future and sought to dominate it. Long before content became a buzzword for the Internet generation, Wasserman bought Paramount Pictures' film library for peanuts and peddled it to the networks for millions. With the gusto of Howard Cosell at ringside, Bruck reports on business coup after business coup, showing not only how Wasserman roped his dopes but also how he acquired the leverage (Mob lawyer Sidney Korshak helped) to do so. This is the most revealing look at the business of Hollywood since Robert Evans growled his way through *The Kid Stays in the Picture* (1994). Ilene Cooper Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved From *When Hollywood Had a King* On Lew Wasserman: "He helped me become president, he helped me stay president, he helped me be a better president." —Bill Clinton "If Hollywood was Mount Olympus, Lew Wasserman is Zeus." —Jack Valent "At a time when the general image of business executives is not sterling, Lew Wasserman is the gold standard." —Barry Diller "I'm a very simple man." —Lew Wasserman, to President Lyndon Baines Johnson From the Hardcover edition.