



Shooting to Kill

Christine Vachon , David Edelstein

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Complete with behind-the-scenes diary entries from the set of Vachon's best-known films, *Shooting to Kill* offers all the satisfaction of an intimate memoir from the frontlines of independent filmmaking, from one of its most successful agent provocateurs -- and survivors. Hailed by the New York Times as the "godmother to the politically committed film" and by *Interview* as a true "auteur producer," Christine Vachon has made her name with such bold, controversial, and commercially successful films as "Poison," "Swoon," "Kids," "Safe," "I Shot Andy Warhol," and "Velvet Goldmine." Over the last decade, she has become a driving force behind the most daring and strikingly original independent filmmakers--from Todd Haynes to Tom Kalin and Mary Harron--and helped put them on the map. So what do producers do? "What don't they do?" she responds. In this savagely witty and straight-shooting guide, Vachon reveals the guts of the filmmaking process--from developing a script, nurturing a director's vision, getting financed, and drafting talent to holding hands, stoking egos, stretching every resource to the limit and pushing that limit. Along the way, she offers shrewd practical insights and troubleshooting tips on handling everything from hysterical actors and disgruntled teamsters to obtuse marketing executives.

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Shooting to Kill Details

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Priscilla says

An amazingly detailed view into producing independent films in the 1990s. Insightful, engaging, and bursting with advice borne of experience.

shana naomi says

saskia called this book "generous" and i still can't think of a better word to describe it. a very smart, detailed inside look at running an independent film company during the '90s. great daily production diaries from the making of "velvet goldmine." plus, line by line explanations/summaries of production budgets for various sized indie films.

vachon has a steely fierceness but also a remarkable amount of candor about how often she has to either make shit up or just leap into some unknown. the tone is really set very early, where she talks about the early days of her work with director todd haynes:

Many people think that if you're not in a state of crisis on a movie, you're not really working... When we started making movies together, he said, "Don't yell at me and I won't yell at you. Let's just not be like that."...The amount of time spent trying to blame somebody else is simply not worth it. The bottom line is, you cannot be a producer unless you understand that it's all your fault.

looking forward to reading the newer follow-up. (i'd read parts of this one before but never the whole thing - despite some very dated specs around technology, the underlying principles are totally the same.)

Henry Sturcke says

In this book, the author—one of the most distinctive producers in independent film—offers a behind-the-scenes view of what a producer does. The text is peppered with anecdotes from films by Todd Haynes, Todd Solondz, and some directors not named Todd, and is interrupted by insets from others she works with about specific aspects of the process. The book even includes detailed sample budgets, which would be more useful to readers contemplating their own film than it was to me; I confess I skimmed them. Besides, they were based on technology twenty years ago. I wonder how the digital revolution has affected the economics, not only in the shooting stage but even more so in editing.

The style is chatty and informal, with just the right amount of humor and sass. It left me with a mixed message: you'd have to be out of your mind to live your life this way, but isn't it wonderful? I'm convinced that both halves of that statement are true.

Belal Khan says

Must read for anyone wanting to do professional filmmaking. Includes real life story of producer plus

outlines for budgets and what to expect as a producer.

Christopherseelie says

A great little book that gives the producer's perspective on making movies outside the studio setting. Some of the info seems dated, but after reading it the process of getting a story from script to screen to wide/limited release is less mysterious.

G.K. Noyer says

I've read a lot of books on these subjects, but this is probably the best I've read so far, along with Sidney Lumet's "Making Movies", and even more informative. Both are highly readable, amusing, down to earth and generous books but Vachon's offers even more details and her deadpan feet-on-the ground advice is priceless, candid and mature. Sure, some of the technical stuff has changed since she wrote it. Those minor details can be skimmed. But most of it has not.

I highly recommend it to anyone dealing with movies, or who wants to, and not just those who want to produce an indie film, by any means. Technicians, directors and scriptwriters - especially those who grumble about producers - all ought to experience this book. Vachon puts you in their seat, with all the pitfalls (including a shooting interrupted by the LA earthquake of '95!), setbacks and insanity you should bear in mind. And all the (very drole) words of warning re festivals, film markets, distributors and every aspect that you could hope for. Generous is indeed an excellent description of this book!

Andrea says

Excellent book, for anyone wanting to join the independent filmmaking ranks over to studio levels. Each time I read this book I continuously get inspired and motivated to push forward in what I do. Although the book is outdated due to the revolution of digital filmmaking and digital viewing, it's stories and passion can still teach you. She covers many movies that she had worked on, a lot of which are great films to watch, such as Kids, And I shot Andy Warhol, Velvet Goldmine etc. Christine Vachon has always been a hero in independent cinema and to myself, this book hopefully serves the same to anybody who picks it up.

Chris says

Good, if a little dated by now in terms of digital film-making. There are sample budgets, complete with a line by line breakdown with real world explanations. That and the crew position descriptions were the highlights for me. Great to hear a personal perspective on a crew position, pitfalls, etc. -- rather than just a text book definition.

Would love to read an updated edition!

Nick Escobar says

An excellent read for anyone getting started in independent film. Eighty percent of the challenges remain the same and while costs like film stock and development have all but disappeared new ones have emerged to take their place. The supplemental materials, like the budget breakdowns and questionnaire examples, are a boon for anyone starting out.

Additionally, it's always exciting for film enthusiasts to read about the behind the scenes of actual movie productions. No matter the scale.

Read if you love the movies she helped produce, independent cinema or are interested in making films at any level.

Kit Fox says

Christine Vachon has quite the knack for writing and this book is crammed with all kinds of useful information about the roles of an independent producer. Can't wait to read her next book, seeing as when this one was written, *Velvet Goldmine* was still being edited. Really makes one want to get out there and do stuff...if that's your thing, you know?

Jim Hunnicutt says

An indispensable guide for anyone who has the desire to create a film but none of the money. Vachon breaks down the film making process into a form that is easy to understand and follow. She effectively points out the problems encountered in low-budget film making so that you can avoid the majority of the pitfalls normally found by aspiring film artists.

Sean Campbell says

Excellent book, full of personal stories on producing an independent film. One minor issue I had with it, and it wasn't with the book itself, but it deals a lot with the author's experience producing a movie called Happiness. HAPPINESS IS A TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE MOVIE!!!

Thankfully I never saw it until I was finished with the book, otherwise I would have burned the damn thing.

Gr

Judy Alter says

I think the author of one of my favorite series just came up with my favorite of the five books. Shooting to Kill is complicated and complex, and you'll be puzzled by who did what and who murdered the loveable vet, but you'll also, if you're a fan like me, be glad to enter Thea Campbell's familiar world and greet again all the people you've come to know. A great page-turner.

Renato says

Um resumo extremamente pragmático do universo do cinema independente americano durante os anos 90. A autora faz uso daquela escrita jornalística, muito "matter-of-factly" e com piadas imbecis pelo meio de que os americanos tanto gostam mas que a mim dá comichões (exemplo: um capítulo chama-se "The budget: making it count"); ainda assim, consegue metralhar centenas de histórias, peripécias e curiosidades sobre a sua experiência pessoal como produtora, o que torna o livro não o guia organizado e orgânico que tenta ser mas uma colecção mais ou menos desordenada de anedotas curtas e informativas. É praticamente impossível não encontrar aqui dez ou quinze dicas que só uma pessoa largamente experimentada nos pode oferecer, e por isso o tom descomprometido do livro dá-nos a sensação de que estamos a tomar café com a autora. Mas, no geral, é útil? Nem por isso; o que significa para mim a descrição do orçamento de um filme de 200 mil dólares se foi filmado há 15 anos e noutro continente? Vou aprender algo de realmente útil num capítulo sobre pós-produção que apresenta o vídeo como a tecnologia mais actual? E como é suposto interessar-me pela melhor forma de lidar com os sindicatos dos condutores de veículos pesados nova-iorquinos? E porquê a selecção daquela que me parece ser, objectivamente, a capa mais pirosa/feia/esteticamente desprezível com a qual já tive o prazer de me aleijar?

Jesse says

i want to be friends with Christine Vachon.
