

*Film Art*, eighth edition  
Supplement to Chapter One:

Six Major Media Companies and Some of their Holdings  
as of January 2007

In Chapter One of *Film Art*, we discuss the film industry and survey its major areas of activity: Production, distribution, and exhibition. Most film production and distribution activities in the US are controlled by six large corporations. Although US law has traditionally prevented these companies from owning movie theaters, during the 1990s the strictures were loosened. Today Viacom, for example, not only owns Paramount and other production/ distribution firms; it also owns National Amusements, a theater chain with over 1000 screens in the US and several hundred more overseas.

These conglomerates have holdings in television, publishing, and other media. Nearly all have created specialty divisions aimed at distinct audiences. Alongside mass-market movies, the Majors market "independent" films, children's pictures, animation, and the like--just as they readily target niche audiences with special-interest magazines, TV programs, and Internet sites. In all these cases, the markets for media content can be extended through merchandising, theme parks, and other investments.

These firms also control the distribution of many American films, television programs, and publications abroad. Distribution, in this case, involves not only theatrical exhibition but cable, satellite, and Internet delivery. News Corp., owned and overseen by Rupert Murdoch, has invested heavily in BSkyB, Star TV, and DirecTV satellite systems.

The Majors don't only create American media content. They may fund films and television programs in overseas markets, then sell the products both locally and internationally. For example, Universal owns Working Title, a British production company that specializes in films with an Anglo air (*Notting Hill*, *Billy Elliott*). Working Title films have proven popular not only in the United Kingdom but around the world.

By owning many media companies and outlets, the Majors hope to exploit synergy, the moving of one piece of content across media platforms. Executives hope that a best-seller from the firm's publishing arm can become a film or TV show. Warner Bros.' ownership of DC comics provided the impetus for the first cycle of *Batman* films.

With so many branches and subdivisions, do the Majors sometimes lose track of who's on the same side? Apparently so. In 2003, *The Simpsons* ran a parody of Fox News Channel's conservative stance, including a news ticker at the bottom of the screen bearing such lines as "Do Democrats Cause Cancer?" and "Oil slicks found to keep seals young, supple. . ." Fox News Channel threatened to sue the show's makers. But *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening pointed out that the show was also a Fox product, which meant that Fox would be suing itself. The suit was withdrawn.

	<b>Time Warner</b>	<b>Disney</b>	<b>Viacom</b>	<b>Sony</b>	<b>News Corp.</b>	<b>NBC Universal (Parent company: General Electric)</b>
<b>Film Production and Distribution</b>	Warner Bros., Castle Rock, New Line, Picturehouse, Warner Independent	Buena Vista, Hollywood Pictures, Touchstone, Walt Disney Pictures, Miramax, Pixar	Paramount Pictures, Paramount Vantage, DreamWorks SKG	Columbia Pictures, TriStar, Sony Pictures Classics. Screen Gems, MGM/ United Artists (partial)	Twentieth Century Fox, Fox Searchlight, Fox Faith	Universal Pictures, Universal Focus, Working Title
<b>Movie Theaters</b>	Warner Bros. International Theaters; Cinamerica (50 % with Viacom)		National Amusements, Famous Players, Cinamerica (50 % with Warner Bros.)	Loews Cineplex Entertainment		
<b>Broadcast, Cable, and Satellite TV</b>	HBO, WB, CNN, Turner Network TV, Turner Classic Movies, Cartoon Network, Road Runner LLC	ABC network, Disney Channel, Lifetime (partial), ESPN, local TV stations, ABC radio	CBS network, local TV stations, Showtime, MTV, VH1, Nickelodeon, BET, TV Land, Spike TV, Comedy Central, Sundance Channel	Sony Pictures Television	Twentieth Century Fox TV, Fox Broadcasting Company, DirecTV, Sky TV, Star TV, local TV stations	NBC network, local TV stations, Universal Television, Bravo, Sci-Fi cable network, USA network (partial)
<b>Publishing</b>	Warner Books, Little, Brown, <i>Time</i> , <i>Fortune</i> , <i>Sports Illustrated</i> , <i>People</i> ,	Capital City newspapers, magazines	Simon & Schuster, Prentice-Hall, Free Press, Webster's Dictionary	Sony/ATV Music Publishing (partial)	<i>New York Post</i> , <i>The Times</i> (London), and other newspapers; <i>TV Guide</i>	Penguin Books, Putnam

	<i>Entertainment Weekly</i> , DC comics				(partial), HarperCollins, Westview Press	
<b>Music</b>	Warner Music group, including Asylum, Atlantic, Badboy, Elektra labels	Walt Disney Records, Hollywood Records, Lyric Street Records	Famous Music	Sony BMG (partial), including Arista, Columbia, Epic labels	Fox Music	Music Corporation of America (MCA), PolyGram
<b>Other</b>	Netscape AOL internet services, Six Flags theme parks, Atlanta Braves, Warner Bros. stores	Disneyland and Disney World theme parks and resorts, Buena Vista Theatrical Productions (stage shows), merchandise stores, cruise line, Baby Einstein company	Blockbuster video stores, Great America and Kings Dominion theme parks	Consumer electronics, videogame consoles, professional audio-visual equipment (high-definition video cameras, etc.).	MySpace.com, National Rugby League, sheep farming, airlines	Universal theme parks, real estate. Parent company GE: energy systems, aircraft engines, finance, insurance, medical systems, plastics, etc.