

NEHST Studio's Larry Meistrich Brings Filmmaking to the People

Larry Meistrich gained success in the film industry by starting and running The Shooting Gallery, an independent studio, and Film Movement. He is currently the founder and Chairman of NEHST Studios, which launched in May 2007. The company's primary focus is on producing independent films, but it also fosters production via television, the internet, and other media. NEHST encompasses all aspects of the creative process, including financing, production, and distribution.



Larry Meistrich

NEHST's goal is to provide resources for filmmakers and artists who might otherwise never have access to a studio's support, as well as bridging the gap between traditional moviemaking and new technologies and economic factors in the modern market.

Screen Magazine got a chance to talk to Larry Meistrich.

Screen Magazine: Can you tell me about the boot camps you're doing through NEHST?

Larry Meistrich: What our boot camps are about are kind of a realistic, intensive weekend, where we tell you really how to get into the industry today, teach people how to go about the process of raising money, how to properly develop something, how to pitch. Then at the end of the weekend, we have a pitch session where we allow everybody who's gone through the weekend to pitch. Maybe you're good enough to get a deal, maybe you're not, but people do give us pretty good feedback that they learned a lot from it. We're trying to stay out of the big, big market, because they need it less.

I wouldn't know how to break in today if I was just starting out and didn't have what I have built up over a career. You know, it's a very, very different marketplace, and there's this perception that if you're not represented, you're not worth it. I think that's very short-sighted, and frankly very bad business.

SM: NEHST also promotes that you don't need to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to make good movies.

LM: Exactly. Look, the reality is - Hollywood makes blockbusters really well. They do a great job at it, as evidenced by Iron Man and Indiana Jones and Sex and the City. That's what Hollywood does best. I think Hollywood has lost its interest in the smaller films and has lost its skill set at it. But I think there's an enormous opportunity now, actually, to fill the hole in between Iron Man and YouTube user-generated content.

SM: How has the internet affected your approach to distribution?

LM: We're going to use the internet as a tool towards distribution, particularly a marketing tool, and ultimately, a window of distribution.

I think you're going to see a lot of shorter form content, a lot of longer form content. I don't think theatrical's ever going away - I just think it's going to be a different kind of experience. And it's going to be more events marketing, like a basketball game, than it has been in the past.

I'm a single parent, so for me to go to a movie, it requires a babysitter, prep time, planning it out, 4-6 hours, hundreds of dollars, driving. And I think I'm an incredibly common consumer. So, when I do go to a movie, it's an event, like my kid - we went to Iron Man, and my son's really into Indiana Jones. He got the hat and the whip and we went to the theater, we bought the popcorn and the soda, and it was a lot of fun, it was great. But it was an event. I think that's going to become the more common Hollywood big blowup theatrical experience.

SM: What role do state incentives play in where a film is shot? How big of a factor are they?

LM: I think for us it's a huge factor. I think it's going to be an even greater factor in the future. And what I think's going to happen is now the states are competing with each other. The bottom line is film is manufacturing. So communities have really realized the true value of the economic impact, and I think it's going to escalate. Soon, every state will have a program, and then states will keep revising their programs to make it better and better, and I think it will become a pretty integral part of filmmaking.

SM: Are you worried about copyright issues?

LM: Well, we obviously copyright everything. But I know people are going to take our stuff. We're addressing that and not asking them to pay for everything - and find other ways to monetize. I like the Radiohead model very much. And I think that's kind of the wave of the future. And I do think there's other sources though, outside of banks, for filmmakers now. I think brands are a big source. There is still a lot of cash out there, it's just not probably going to be lent to filmmakers. We spend a lot of time trying to help people structure things so they have a

chance to get an investment as opposed to just a bad structure that doesn't take into account how people invest or why they invest or the economy that they live in.

SM: Are there any other major problems facing the industry that you want to talk about, or any advice?

LM: I think filmmakers need to do their homework and understand the business that they're trying to work in, even if they're not business people, having an understanding of it can only help you make a better film and have more of a chance to succeed.

SM: And that sounds a lot like what your studio is trying to do, just promote awareness of all aspects of the industry that are facing filmmakers.

LM: We're trying to promote awareness, and most importantly, we're trying to promote access.

I think the industry in general needs to wake up and pay attention.

For more information on Larry Meistrich and NEHST Studios, please www.nehst.com, www.pitchnehst.com, and www.screentest.biz.

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