

Conclusion

Legends of the Film Industry

After 2008, New Line Cinema persisted as a small division within the Warner Bros. studio, itself a division within the Time Warner conglomerate (now Warner Bros. Discovery; the mergers never stop). This book details how, prior to this moment, New Line was defined by significant transformation over time, and shows also that its cultural and industrial identity was unstable at any given moment. Inheriting a distinctively mixed catalog accumulated over forty twisty years in film production and distribution, the post-2008 New Line Cinema maintained some fidelity to its former self, particularly as it continued to trade in humor, horror, and Hobbits. But the division also adjusted its strategies in keeping with the designs of its corporate parent and in line with larger trends in the media business.

Following the departure of Bob Shaye, Michael Lynne, and many others, Warner Bros. appointed Toby Emmerich as New Line's president and CEO. As with so many aspects of New Line's story, Emmerich's ascent to this position was unconventional; indeed, one wonders if there is such a thing as a conventional upward career path in the movie business. Emmerich joined the company's music department in 1992 and worked in that area for years. After he wrote and produced the film *Frequency* with New Line in 2000, the company appointed him as head of production in 2001, replacing Michael De Luca. Press reports suggested that the position would present a challenge for Emmerich and also noted how different his calm disposition was from his predecessor's.¹ New Line had a number of big hits under Emmerich's supervision, including *Elf* (2003), *The Notebook* (2004), and *Wedding Crashers* (2005). Although he was successful, some in the industry perceived Emmerich as deviating from New Line's established identity with such light material, pulling the company away from horror cinema specifically.² For some, Emmerich's rise to the top of New Line "was hard to fathom," as one report

noted, because he had approved the production of several flops, including *Son of the Mask* (2005).³

Despite the significant reduction in its financing, annual slate, and autonomy, Emmerich asserted that New Line would continue to operate in much the same way as it had. “So much of the company I’ve worked at for the past 16 years is being reconceived,” he said, “but I’m committed to maintaining New Line’s corporate DNA as a creative, aggressive entity. I plan to continue New Line’s long and productive history as a company that can create hits in new niches—whether it’s expanding the horror genre . . . or turning an R-rated comedy like ‘Wedding Crashers’ into a blockbuster.”⁴

Another article reported that New Line’s development would be “restricted to genre-specific material like horror, low-budget comedy and urban,” with “urban” serving as a codeword for “Black.”⁵ Seeking to eliminate redundancies with Warner Bros. and to cut costs across the conglomerate, Time Warner planned for New Line to scale back to six to eight pictures a year with budgets averaging \$30 to \$40 million.⁶ Hundreds of staff were let go, and about a decade later, in 2017, the New Line unit had only thirty-five employees.⁷

New Line gained positive press in 2010 for not only surviving the Warner Bros. takeover but actually flourishing.⁸ A number of hit films continued New Line’s shift toward more lighthearted fare. This run included romantic comedies like *He’s Just Not That Into You* (2009) and *Valentine’s Day* (2010), as well as high-profile films like *Sex and the City* (2008) and *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (2008), both of which featured well-known stars and sizable production budgets.

As the decade proceeded, in fact, New Line produced a handful of spectacle-driven action films, including *Journey 2: The Mysterious Island* (2012), *San Andreas* (2015), and *Rampage* (2018), all of which starred Dwayne Johnson, aka “The Rock.” As per New Line’s reorganization, the division served merely as a production company on these films, while Warner Bros. conducted all the marketing and distribution. Further, New Line’s spectacle films were generally smaller-scaled in comparison to Warner tentpoles of the period, such as *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012) or *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016). An exception to this was *Jack the Giant Slayer* (2012), a New Line production that cost nearly \$200 million and proved to be a massive failure even more severe than *The Golden Compass*.

New Line’s biggest movies were several films adapted from J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*, set in the same world as *The Lord of the Rings* and starring some of the same actors. Even after the verbal scuffles between Shaye and Jackson, the *Hobbit* adaptation remained troubled. MGM had lingering financial difficulties and the Writers Guild of America strike of 2007–8 delayed the crafting of a screenplay.⁹ Moreover, New Line was once again sued for not paying royalties properly from *The Lord of the Rings*, this time by the Tolkien estate, which sought to block production on *The Hobbit*, and the lawsuit was not settled until 2009.¹⁰ Further, the

project's creative control was jumbled. An initial plan in 2008 entailed Guillermo del Toro directing two films with Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh producing. Yet del Toro left the project in 2010 after two years of development work.

Jackson returned to direct, with a plan to make not two but three films based on this one book. Splitting single fantasy novels into multiple films became something of a trend in the 2010s, with the final *Harry Potter* novel, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, split into *Part 1* (2010) and *Part 2* (2011), the final *Twilight* book split into *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn—Part 1* (2011) and *Part 2* (2012), and the final book in the *Hunger Games* trilogy, *Mockingjay*, also split into two films (2014, 2015). The case of *The Hobbit* seemed conspicuous, however, as all those other examples had been planned as double films before filming began, whereas the third *Hobbit* film was split off after production had commenced.¹¹ Extending the novel in multiple ways, the *Hobbit* film trilogy added scenes and characters merely mentioned in the book, or in some cases mentioned in another work by J. R. R. Tolkien, or invented scenes and characters original to the films.

Production on the *Hobbit* films spanned many months in 2011–12, followed by additional shooting in 2013. Warner Bros. financed the films, spending nearly a billion dollars on the trilogy. This investment paid off. Following the pattern of the *Lord of the Rings* films, Warner Bros. released each *Hobbit* movie in mid-December in 2012, 2013, and 2014 consecutively. Each film earned around \$1 billion at the global box office, thus making this new trilogy match the \$3 billion theatrical take of the original trilogy, not adjusting for inflation. Also like *The Lord of the Rings*, Warner released extended versions of the *Hobbit* movies on home video. Although the *Hobbit* films were financially successful, they never generated the same sense of innovation and victory that New Line had achieved with *The Lord of the Rings* a decade earlier.

In fact, although the *Hobbit* trilogy had the New Line logo attached to it, and although the series linked directly with the company's most successful films, the press occasionally treated the films as a success for *Warner Bros.* and situated New Line as a mere label placed on certain films when it was convenient for Time Warner to do so. Regarding *The Hobbit* films, the *Los Angeles Times* asserted, "With its blockbuster 'Harry Potter' and Christopher Nolan-directed Batman franchises both now concluded, Warner Bros. is hungry for franchise pictures."¹² Similarly, when the first *Hobbit* movie cleared \$1 billion, a Warner Bros. executive stated, "Together with our partners at MGM and New Line, everyone at Warner Bros. congratulates Peter Jackson and his entire cast and crew on the extraordinary success of this film."¹³ New Line's success was now ultimately Warner Bros.'s success.

Following the 2008 reorganization, New Line also sustained its consistency in working on outrageous comedies. The division continued its multiracial stoner series with *Harold & Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay* (2008), followed by *A Very Harold & Kumar 3D Christmas* (2011). In the 1990s and early 2000s, New Line had established a history with other stoner films like *Friday*, and otherwise had

released PG-13-rated films about juvenile and outlandish male characters, such as *The Mask* and *Austin Powers*, with the occasional family-friendly comedy like *Elf* mixed in. But the breakout success of the R-rated *Wedding Crashers* in 2005 set a new trajectory that New Line would follow through to the end of the 2010s. Likely also inspired by the success of *The Hangover* (2009) from Warner Bros. and *Bridesmaids* (2011) from Universal Pictures, New Line produced a run of adult-oriented, raunchy comedies, many of which featured ensemble star casts in plots that entailed grown-up characters involved in playfully deviant, R-rated behavior. *Hall Pass* (2011), *We're the Millers* (2013), *Horrible Bosses* (2011), and *Horrible Bosses 2* (2014) all derive their humor from adults behaving in socially inappropriate ways, often related to professionalism, romance, or domestic family life. These traits can also be found in New Line's reboot of *Vacation* (2015), as well as *Game Night* (2018) and *Tag* (2018), the last two of which depicted grown-ups engaging in childlike play to bizarre extremes.

New Line was strongly associated with horror films from the 1980s onward, and the division continued in this genre after 2008. It partnered with Michael Bay's company Platinum Dunes on reboots of *Friday the 13th* (2009) and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (2010). As reboots that aimed to be grittier and more "authentic" than the source texts, these films adhered to a more contemporary industrial strategy and cinematic sensibility.¹⁴ The films followed in the wake of several blockbuster reboots in the 2000s that sought to return to the beginnings of a well-known character, including Bruce Wayne/Batman in *Batman Begins* (2005) and James Bond in *Casino Royale* (2006). During this same period, Platinum Dunes produced a reboot of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003) and remakes of *The Amityville Horror* (2005) and *The Hitcher* (2007). Rebooting became standard practice in Hollywood during the 2010s, allowing distribution companies to re-exploit existing IP resources across cinema, cable, and the increasingly important streaming services. As a pervasive intertextual and industrial strategy, rebooting suited the multimedia needs of the contemporary multimedia conglomerates.

But it would be incorrect to link New Line too strongly with horror reboots, just as it would be misguided to say that New Line itself was rebooted in 2008. Rather, New Line's most definitive contribution to the horror genre after 2008 was *The Conjuring* (2013), a newly developed intellectual property from the unit. With this film and the ensuing "Conjuring Universe" franchise, New Line caught onto and significantly shaped a new phase of ghost story cinema, dovetailing with the comparable *Insidious* film series (2010, 2013, 2015, 2018). Just as important, the *Conjuring* films successfully deployed a "shared universe" industrial and textual logic within the horror genre. This practice has important precedents, but the contemporary model and highest standard is the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), initiated by *Iron Man* in 2008. Now consisting of more than twenty-five feature films and fifteen television series, the MCU presents characters and stories developed from Marvel superhero comic books in one, large diegetic world that has

its own internal historical development. Many MCU films have made more than \$1 billion at the global box office, and the franchise as a whole is estimated to have garnered over \$25 billion in total; this number does not include revenue generated by television, streaming, or merchandizing.¹⁵

Following the success of *Iron Man* and several subsequent MCU films, multiple Hollywood studios attempted to create similarly organized industrial intertexts out of their existing properties. Most of these efforts failed to create a franchise as sustained or internally logical as the MCU. Examples include Universal's attempt to create a "Dark Universe," based on monsters like Dracula and the Mummy, and Warner Bros.'s haphazard efforts to create a shared cinematic universe based on DC comic books. But, recalling the way in which New Line franchised Freddy Krueger across numerous texts to various consumers in the 1980s, New Line spun out a networked franchise from *The Conjuring* in the 2010s. Although the Conjuring Universe was not as expansive or as intricate as the MCU, New Line and Warner Bros. managed to promote the franchise as a "shared universe" well enough that critics and audiences came to regard it as such.

The first *Conjuring* film tells the tale of a family living in a haunted house and the "paranormal investigators" who seek to eradicate the problem. The researchers are based on real-life figures Ed and Lorraine Warren, who really did operate as ghost hunters from the 1950s through the 1980s and who found fame with the case that inspired the *Amityville Horror* book and film adaptations. Directed by James Wan, the film is stylistically sharp, affectively moody, and extremely effective in creating tension and jump scares. In these respects, *The Conjuring* resembles the director's film *Insidious* more than his gruesome breakout film *Saw* (2004).

Propelled by Warner Bros.'s expansive distribution power, *The Conjuring* earned more than \$300 million internationally. As one story reported, the film "surpassed all expectations for the genre, becoming the highest grossing Warner Bros. Pictures horror release within the past 15 years internationally, second only to the 1973 release of "The Exorcist."¹⁶ Such reporting at once indicates New Line's diminished stature within Time Warner, to the point of occasional discursive erasure, and its continued financial importance to the conglomerate. Perhaps most important, it indicates how New Line's continued specialization in horror cinema managed to be rescaled to meet the global ambitions of Time Warner.

As characters, the Warrens provided obvious sequel possibilities, as the couple could investigate one haunted house after another in film after film. But *The Conjuring* also opened up indirect spin-off possibilities through the many cursed, freaky items that the Warrens collected in their house. One of these, a creepy doll named Annabelle that is the focus of a vignette in the film, became the center of the first movie derived from *The Conjuring*. Budgeted more modestly than *The Conjuring* at around \$6 million, *Annabelle* (2014) depicts a previous instance of the demon-possessed doll terrorizing a family before coming into the Warrens's possession. Reviews asserted that *Annabelle* was deficient in comparison to the first film, yet it earned \$250 million.

Annabelle was so successful, in fact, that it momentarily repositioned New Line's importance within Time Warner. As the *Los Angeles Times* noted, "New Line Cinema's low-budget horror film 'Annabelle' couldn't have come at a better time for parent company Warner Bros."¹⁷ Warner Bros. chief Kevin Tsujihara added, "New Line is a really important piece of the puzzle for having a really broad and diverse slate. . . . 'Annabelle' is a great example of the grittiness that New Line does so well. They are very scrappy, and they made a film that quite frankly wouldn't have happened at Warner Bros."¹⁸ With such qualified praise, Tsujihara at once pigeonholed New Line and yet also suggested that Warner Bros.'s singular focus on spectacular, tentpole blockbusters may not have been a fully sufficient business strategy in the 2010s, a period in which cable continued to be crucial to media conglomerates and streaming platforms like Netflix and Hulu took on increasing importance to the media business generally.

New Line produced a direct sequel in 2015, *The Conjuring 2*, for over \$40 million, not including marketing and advertising costs, doubling the production budget of the original.¹⁹ Warner Bros. distributed *The Conjuring 2* in summer 2016 like a blockbuster, releasing it simultaneously on more than three thousand screens across sixty different international markets.²⁰ Supported by massive advertising, the film earned more than \$300 million internationally. From this point forward, New Line made a spate of films linked to *The Conjuring*, including two more films featuring the Annabelle doll, *Annabelle: Creation* (2017) and *Annabelle Comes Home* (2019); a backstory about a demonic nun seen in *The Conjuring 2* titled *The Nun* (2018); a loosely connected ghost story set in Los Angeles called *The Curse of La Llorona* (2019); and a third film focused on the Warrens, *The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It* (2021).

In some of these cases, Warner Bros. treated the films as major releases. One report noted the scale and tone of the marketing for *Annabelle: Creation*: "Warner backed it with a full-frills advertising campaign—billboards, stunts designed to stir up online chatter—that combined to hammer home one message: This was a quality movie, not just some throwaway possessed-doll schlock dumped in the doldrums of summer."²¹ In this and other instances when Warner Bros. positioned a *Conjuring* Universe film as "quality horror," one gets a sense of New Line's post-2008 identity and status: it was a sideline genre unit that nevertheless had to represent the global power and cultural legitimacy of the massive Time Warner conglomerate (known as WarnerMedia after AT&T purchased it in 2018).

The *Conjuring* franchise was a boon for New Line and for Time Warner, a success often noted in the press. In a story about *Annabelle: Creation* (2017), for example, one article reported that it and other horror films were "providing a mid-sized lifeline to some studios that are struggling with their blockbuster IPs."²² In this manner, New Line's penchant for making small- and midrange films in distinct genres had continuing value in a rapidly shifting entertainment media business. Along these lines, Emmerich noted in 2017 the continued importance of smaller-scaled, targeted genre movies in the contemporaneous multiplatform

media context. “With all the entertainment options that exist,” he said, “it’s made the theatrical experience a harder target to hit. It has allowed an opportunity for more genre films . . . to thrive as counterprogramming.”²³ In 2018 when *The Nun* achieved the highest opening weekend of the series thus far, New Line’s value appeared transparent in both senses of the word. Although this unit had produced another hit, Warner Bros. earned much of the praise in the press, with one story reporting that “Warner Bros. dominated the top two spots of the weekend” with *The Nun* and *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018).²⁴

In addition to the *Conjuring* franchise, New Line scored with a new, two-part film adaptation of Stephen King’s novel *It*. Warner Bros. promoted *It: Chapter One* (2017) and *Chapter Two* (2019) as blockbusters having broad appeal, despite their R ratings, with enormous and effective advertising campaigns and cross-promotions involving fast food restaurants. The two films earned \$1 billion combined.²⁵ Reflecting on these films as well as the *Conjuring* franchise, one article asserted, “New Line, which made its name as the home of ‘A Nightmare on Elm Street,’ has had to evolve with changing tastes and rising competition . . . [and the company’s] approach to horror has adapted. The films typically feature relatable characters and family themes in scary-movie settings, in contrast to the disposable victims of classic slasher films. That helps broaden their appeal.”²⁶

Not quite a shadow of its former self, as it made films that were generally bigger and ostensibly more accessible than it once had. Not exactly Warner Bros. by another name, either, as it made films and specialized in genres that the parent studio would not. But the post-2008 New Line wasn’t exactly New Line.

NEW LINE’S LEGACIES

In instances throughout this book, I discuss New Line Cinema’s “legend” and have referred to such industrial and cultural identity work as “legend building.” In numerous acts of self-mediation and automythography, New Line worked to construct and project a more or less coherent institutional identity. Further, the frequent coverage of New Line, its employees, and its films in the trade and popular press significantly contributed to, expanded, and complicated the company’s legend. Most of these enunciations and discourses aimed at a community of media industry professionals comprising New Line’s competitors and potential collaborators, and it is unlikely that New Line ever affixed itself firmly in the minds of a general public. People were fans of *Reefer Madness* or *A Nightmare on Elm Street* or *Rush Hour*; relatively few were fans of New Line Cinema.

But the cultural connotations and associations woven through these mediations and self-mediations are significant. They shaped the very course of New Line’s business operations, and, indeed, they help illuminate how media institutions more generally imagine themselves, theorize their function, and project images of themselves as a matter of course.²⁷ The New Line Cinema presented in this book

entails its films, its promotional materials for its films and for the company itself, its internal and external discourses, and the discourses that it provoked. Looking at New Line Cinema in this multidimensional way specifically helps illustrate how subject to transformation the company really was. New Line's mutability is precisely what made it successful and reflective of larger changes in the film industry and media culture.

New Line proved in the 1970s that there was a small but important market for highly esoteric movies on the cinema screens of college campuses and midnight movie theaters, a market that thrived precisely because of its desire for alternatives to mainstream cinema. Within this arena, New Line illustrated how tiny, eclectic, and opportunistic distributors could identify, appeal to, and cultivate small but dedicated audiences based on taste distinctions and, relatedly, social identities, particularly through targeted marketing and advertising strategies.

New Line was not the only company to pursue this market, but it was one of the rare companies to transfer this strategy into a more robust and sustained practice in the 1980s, and it managed to attract large-scale audiences and achieved truly significant financial rewards as a result. As the "New Hollywood" of the period prioritized a youthful cinema of spectacle and franchising across home video and myriad merchandise, New Line showed how these same principles could be deployed with minor genres, particularly inexpensive and violent horror films. *A Nightmare on Elm Street* reached broad audiences and consumers, even children, through clever textual use of cheesy humor and even cleverer exploitation of home video and other forms of franchising. At the same time, New Line showed how independent distributors of the 1980s were best served by keeping their belts tight, their ambitions measured, and their successes predictable.

Indeed, if we see the 1980s as a period of increasing sanitization and corporatization in both the American film industry and movie culture, then New Line also underscores how small, flexible distributors could succeed by making more eclectic and peripheral stories, characters, and genres appealing beyond their apparent limits. New Line's operations in the 1980s and into the 1990s indicate how the macro-scale industrial and technological changes of New Hollywood created opportunities to bring the margins to the mainstream, changing the very texture of "the mainstream" in the process. We know that the media business underwent intense corporate consolidation and increasingly prized high-concept tentpoles that could be re-exploited across multiple outlets and products. But sometimes, as with *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, a company could grab hold of a franchise and ride it into the future or, with something like *House Party*, could franchise material that may otherwise have been viewed as narrow due to limited understandings of audiences' entertainment desires. In this last regard, New Line manifested an important aspect of American cinema by showing that Black cinema sometimes could be very important when it did not aim to be important.

New Line exemplifies Hollywood's incorporation of independent and specialty distributors in the 1990s, as the greater American media business came to more fully recognize the value of "niche" material in cinema and narrowcasting on cable. And while Fine Line Features illustrates that American culture continued to prize artistic pedigree, sophistication, and refinement, New Line's greatest *economic* value proved to be much less elegant. "Independent" could be smart like *The Player*, could be queer like *My Own Private Idaho*, or could be quirky like *Spanking the Monkey* (1994). But independent could also be stupid, and independent could be populist, and New Line's combination of all these things, coupled with its fiscal restraint and opportunistic eclecticism, is what made this independent especially attractive to Ted Turner.

After Turner bought New Line in 1993 and then merged with Time Warner in 1996, New Line illustrated the odd place of "independence" within the Conglomerate Hollywood system, particularly as specialty cinema came under the rule of the big media corporations. With its model of growth through incorporative heterogeneity, what New Line illuminated most from the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s is that offbeat cinema does not always pursue prestige and, further, that the boundaries of "offbeat" can sometimes look quite ordinary. Comedy is a conventional genre, to be sure, as is the action film, but *Dumb and Dumber*, *Blade*, and *Rush Hour* were all offbeat in their own way; they made New Line appear odd compared to most other studios, in any case. Looking back, also, to *The Lord of the Rings*, it is easy to view that franchise as the very essence of Hollywood. But doing so dismisses the unconventional path that led to the trilogy's production. It is easy to forget that the books appeared so odd to the industry at the time that *no other company but New Line* wanted to adapt them.

Indeed, one of the greatest lessons of New Line is that American cinema has been even stranger than we might originally think. New Line's story could be wrapped into a metanarrative of increasing homogenization of movie culture, a story about the co-optation of originality and innovation, as the company went from the unruliness of John Waters to the conventionality of *The Notebook*. But this presents too simple a trajectory, and even *this* oversimplified connecting of dots is quite unusual, when thoroughly examined. Consider that Toby Emmerich, who once organized soundtracks for films like *Austin Powers*, was promoted to president and chief content officer of Warner Bros. in 2017, giving him creative control over both Warner Bros. and the New Line unit.²⁸ Then consider that Warner Bros. replaced Emmerich with none other than Michael De Luca in 2022, reversing with bizarre symmetry their professional switcheroo at New Line twenty years earlier. Should we see these trajectories as astonishing, or should we understand New Line Cinema as providing excellent training for running Hollywood?

It is unlikely anyone could have predicted New Line's path through history, or that its place in the American film industry of the 2020s would be so different than it once was. But some of the lessons learned from New Line still resonate beyond

its contemporary iteration. If any company looked more like New Line than New Line during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, it was Lionsgate. Founded in 1997, Lionsgate has been unusually successful as an independent film and television company. As Alisa Perren writes: “Instead of focusing on releasing the edgy, quality or quirky films favored by many indie distributors during the 2000s, Lions Gate primarily favored popular commercial genre fare targeted to clearly defined and often underserved demographic groups such as young adults, African Americans, Latinos, and aging boomers . . . much like 1980s-era New Line, it usually went straight for the money, primarily by acquiring content that proved to be ‘just a little too much.’”²⁹

The comparison to New Line appears apt on a developmental level also. Lionsgate gained economic stability with the *Saw* horror franchise but then had a blockbuster franchise with the *Hunger Games* series, a trajectory comparable to New Line moving from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* to *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and eventually to *The Lord of the Rings*. Lionsgate also sought out Black film and television audiences by partnering with Tyler Perry, who coproduced a string of films predominantly featuring Black performers that Lionsgate distributed. By addressing audiences with particular genres and franchises not dominated by the larger Hollywood studios, Lionsgate has followed a logic of incorporative heterogeneity similar to the one New Line historically traced.

There are important points of contrast, of course. Lionsgate has been much more consistently successful with action films, such as the *John Wick* series (2014–), a genre that New Line struggled with. Perhaps more significant, Lionsgate is as highly active and successful in television as it is in cinema, making it much more of a multimedia corporation than New Line ever was. New Line certainly had a strong Home Entertainment division, but Lionsgate’s work in television has sustained the company much more steadily and strikingly. Too, Lionsgate has sold many of its programs to streaming services like Hulu and Netflix, indicating how the company has aligned with changing industrial practices in Hollywood. As an example of how the two companies are related but are distinguishable, Lionsgate tried to develop a television series based on the same title, premise, and IP as *The Conjuring* at the time that New Line began making the film series.³⁰

Lionsgate’s ability to savvily operate across multiple media and delivery outlets illustrates what is perhaps the greatest industrial change since New Line’s restructuring in 2008: the rise of streaming video. Following more than a decade during which Netflix, Amazon Video, Hulu, and other services exploded the streaming business, the entertainment industry as a whole appeared to commit fully to streaming with the rollout of high-profile services Apple TV+ and Disney+ in November 2019. This was followed by NBC Universal’s Peacock in April 2020 and HBO Max in May; Sony is the only major studio without a proprietary streaming service. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck the United States in March 2020 and home entertainment was the *only* entertainment, streaming

subscriptions rose precipitously.³¹ By 2022, newcomer Disney+ boasted nearly 120 million subscribers, while HBO Max had 73 million, Paramount+ 32 million, and Netflix remained in the top position with 222 million. It is clear that digital delivery will shape Hollywood's composition and business practices for some time to come, symbolized potently by Netflix's entry into the MPAA in 2019 (now the MPA).

All the same, it does not appear that "Streaming Hollywood" has been fully established as a new paradigm. Rather, during the past fifty years the number of outlets and venues for delivering entertainment media have only proliferated with the rare example of a platform or business model disappearing entirely, such as with VHS and the video rental store model. Instead, we see audiences in the United States and across the globe, however incongruently, viewing movies and television programs in movie theaters, on the old broadcast networks, or on one of the multitude of pay cable channels, while also subscribing to one or more of the major streaming services. In this multiportal, multiplatform environment, streaming services like Netflix and Amazon engage in strategies that recall the "two Hollywoods" that characterize Conglomerate Hollywood, as described by Thomas Schatz. The companies make or acquire a small number of high-budget, spectacle-driven productions with star casts, such as Netflix's *Red Notice* (2021), but much more of their offerings are smaller-scaled, niche productions that seek distinct audiences.

Amanda Lotz has described how cable television of the 2000s increasingly addressed "a collection of niche audiences," rather than the "mass" audience of the network era.³² The growth and proliferation of streaming portals has only intensified this logic of expansion, fragmentation, and particularization—a logic of incorporative heterogeneity—in media production and consumption.³³ I am *not* suggesting that New Line blueprinted the shape of Netflix, Prime Video, or any other streaming service. Rather, my point is that the strategies that made New Line successful and attractive to a multimedia corporate empire in the 1990s cohere as commonsense practices today. With this in mind, it seems instructive that in 2022 Amazon launched a blockbuster television series set in the world of Middle Earth, taking place before the stories told in *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*. New Line's biggest gamble—on an unproven property and genre—is now the proven ground from which an e-retailer appeals to media audiences around the world.

In this and other dispersed instances, one can see hints and reminders of New Line Cinema's forty-year journey through the media business. But New Line stands apart, all the same, and it played a distinctively important role in the history of American cinema. A maverick company that made and distributed maverick movies, often with great imagination, New Line's trajectory through time and the film industry was untypical and yet also illustrative. New Line Cinema was and is a legend in every sense of the word.