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A forgotten episode in the history of Hollywood cinema, television and seriality: The case of the Mirisch Company

In this essay I will argue that the Mirisch Company is a missing link, a forgotten episode, in the history of cinematic 'seriality'. It provides, one might even say it helped build, a bridge between classical studio era Hollywood - which ended in about 1960 - and the birth of the so-called New Hollywood, often identified with the Movie Brats - who emerged approximately a decade later. As such, it is a kind of transitional company, producing films that are hybrids between the generic output associated with classical Hollywood and the blockbuster franchises that have been seen as characteristic of much post-'70s American cinema. And one of the many ways in which their work, and the way in which they worked, epitomizes such a transition is their role in the development of series and sequels. As a company making both film and TV series and as executives who worked in the industry before and after the Paramount Decision put an end to vertical integration, the Mirisches saw the financial benefits and risk reductions inherent in a business strategy that included an impetus to repetition.

Before beginning this account, however, I should clarify my terms. As Stuart Henderson points out, "the boundaries of any definition between the sequel, the series, the serial and the saga will always be highly porous." (Henderson, 2014: 5) If my definitions differ from those of some other academics, I suspect this is partly because of my background, not only as a scholar but also as a producer in British television.¹ In British TV, a series is a programme scheduled over a period of weeks (or days, or at other regular intervals), usually in the same slot, with the same subject and star(s), the same characters and situation if it is a sitcom or a drama. Each episode is, conventionally, a self-contained, complete narrative. A serial, on the other hand, carries its storylines as well as its dramatis personae and situation over from one episode to the next. One crucial distinction between a sequel and a series film, meanwhile, seems to be that the latter, while featuring recurring characters, almost never acknowledges the events of previous films in the series. I will return to the question of memory at the end of this chapter. Of course, the boundaries between these forms remain porous, but the essential distinctions remain useful.

In the film industry, as *Variety's* usage confirms, the terms are equally blurred. For instance, in 1959, *Variety* reported that the Mirisch Company was one of four production companies developing "60-minute film stanzas for the 1960-1961 tv season" for NBC. (*Variety*, 2.9.59: 33) A stanza, in *Variety's* lexicon, is a series episode. Two years later, *Variety* reported that the Mirisch Company was developing another series, with

another partner, this time for the cinema. Under the headline, 'Shepherd's Mirisch Series' it noted that producer Richard Shepherd, "...has set a deal with Mirisches for series of pix, first of which will be "Seven Men At Daybreak." (Variety, 2:8.61 p 3) Industry usage of the term 'series' at the time often referred to a contracted number of otherwise unrelated projects rather than a cycle of similar ones. In the absence of the Mirisch Company papers (unavailable until the death of the surviving brother, Walter) this chapter relies heavily on Variety's reports on Mirisch activities.

The regularity with which the terms serial, series, sequel, spin-off and franchise are sometimes assumed to be virtually interchangeable certainly makes it difficult to speak with any precision. For the purposes of this essay I will use the words series and serial as above, while a sequel is an irregular and perhaps singular further episode about a character or characters without a continuing storyline (and indeed often without coherent causal or chronological continuities with its predecessor and progenitor). Sequels seem to me, by definition, to be generated one at a time, as individual one-offs, while serials and franchises are pre-planned to contain multiple episodes. Following Henderson, I use the term spin-off to refer strictly to films, TV programmes and other audio-visual material featuring what were secondary characters from the initial episode. I acknowledge that these definitions are themselves relative, but hope that they provide some fire-proofing against confusion and conflation. Henderson suggests that, "...the defining characteristic of the sequel is its acknowledgment of a chronological narrative relationship with a prior installment.... The dividing line between the sequel and the series film is this: while both forms revisit characters from an earlier episode, the latter can be identified primarily by its general lack of commitment to maintaining narrative continuity from one installment to the next." (Henderson, 2014: 3-4) He also distinguishes usefully between sequels that were what he calls "preconceived" and those which were "ad hoc". (Henderson, 2014: 4)

Recent scholarship on the history of Hollywood series, serials and sequels (for example by Henderson, Jess-Cooke, and Jess-Cooke and Verevis) suggests a critical consensus that they were a commonplace of the early silent period, that in the sound era they were largely, though not exclusively, relegated to second feature status, and that they only re-emerged into respectability (even, occasionally, increasing rather than decreasing box office receipts for subsequent episodes) in the era of the Movie Brats with *Jaws*, *The Godfather* and *Star Wars* in the mid-70s. It is the contention of this chapter, on the other hand, that sequels and series (and some aspects of seriality) were re-introduced into mainstream Hollywood cinema in the 1960s by the new independent production

companies created in the wake of the Paramount decision, one of which was the Mirisch Company. I also argue that the Mirisch Company and its successors contributed disproportionately to the production of such films. In 1957 the majors released 268 movies, 58% of which were produced by independent production companies. One such independent, the Mirisch Company, was formed by three brothers in August 1957, with a distribution deal and finance from United Artists, and over the next eighteen years the company and its offshoots became both the most critically respected (an unprecedented three Best Picture Academy Awards in 8 years) and one of the most commercially successful independents in Hollywood. *The Apartment* won Best Picture, Best Director and Best Original Screenplay Oscar in 1960. *West Side Story* won Best Picture and Best Director in 1961 and was the second highest grossing film of the year. In 1963 *Irma La Douce* was the fifth highest grossing film of the year. In 1966 *Hawaii* was the top grossing film of the year and *The Russians are Coming, The Russians are Coming* was nominated for Best Picture that year. In 1967 *In the Heat of the Night* won Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay Oscars. In 1971 *Fiddler on the Roof* was the highest grossing film in the US. The company also produced *Some Like it Hot*, *The Magnificent Seven*, *The Great Escape*, *The Pink Panther*, *The Thomas Crown Affair* and many more.ⁱⁱ

Among the films produced by the Mirisch Company and its corporate successors (the Mirisch Corporation, Mirisch Productions, Mirisch Films and Mirisch Pictures) for UA between 1957 and the end of their corporate relationship in 1974, several spawned sequels or series. Mirisch titles with returning characters include *The Magnificent Seven* quartet - *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), *The Return of the Seven* (1966), *Guns of the Magnificent Seven* (1969) and *The Magnificent Seven Ride* (1972); *The Pink Panther* (1963) and two sequels, *A Shot in the Dark* (1964) and *Inspector Clouseau* (1968) as well as *The Pink Panther Show* (TV 1969); *In The Heat of the Night* (1967) and its two follow-up films *They Call Me MISTER Tibbs* (1970) and *The Organization* (1971); and *Hawaii* (1966) and its semi-sequel (both films were adapted from different sections of the same novel) *The Hawaiians* (1970).

There were fewer than 130 Hollywood sequels and series films between 1955 and 1974. (Henderson, 2014: 55) The Mirisch Company and its successor corporations produced 12 such films in this period - almost 10% of Hollywood's output in the categories over those years.

Considering how many majors and independents were then producing features, the proportion of such films made by the Mirisch brothers is striking. More specifically, Hollywood produced 70 sequels and series films between 1965 and 1974. Mirisch companies between them were responsible for nine of these, so over 12.8% of Hollywood's sequels and

series films in that ten-year period were Mirisch productions. A total of 62 sequels and series films were among the hundreds of films made in Hollywood during the 1960s. Of those 62, six were produced by Mirisch companies. Given that the major studios and numerous independent production companies were then making features, this too is impressive at almost 10% of the total. Sequels were clearly a crucial part of the Mirisch production strategy throughout this period, initiated soon after the company came into existence and only abandoned shortly before the end of their output deal with UA in 1974.

For all their obvious success as a sequel factory, however, the Mirisches are rarely given the credit they deserve. Indeed, production companies are rarely considered ‘authors’ in film or TV studies, as one look at the conventions for academic citations reveals – directors and distribution companies are named for films, networks for TV programmes. The name Mirisch is conspicuously absent from academic citation lists for their films. This has consequences on assumptions about corporate authorship. Thus Henderson himself writes that, “United Artists was also behind two other series in this period producing multiple follow-ups to *The Pink Panther* (1964) and *The Magnificent Seven* (1960).” (Henderson, 2014: 70) Actually, of course, it was Mirisch, rather than UA, which produced them - UA financed and distributed them. Equally inaccurately, he notes that, “*The Magnificent Seven* inspired two sequels...” (Henderson, 2014: 187) In fact there were three.

Industrial determinants

What explanatory frameworks have been provided for the re-emergence of ‘cinematic seriality’ in post-studio era Hollywood? Three overlapping industrial imperatives – horizontal integration, television series production, and the package-unit system – can be mentioned here and the Mirisch Company and its corporate successors were pioneering in each of these spheres. Firstly, in the form of media conglomeration and convergence; secondly, the advent of production not only for film but also for TV and, crucially, of TV as a destination for film (as well as other media spin-offs including soundtrack albums, novelizations and so on) and including industrial synergies across and between media; and thirdly, the package-unit system of production, by which the film, rather than the firm, became the organizing principle of the movie business. Perhaps paradoxically, it was the very atomization of the industry that, in the case of independents like the Mirisch Company, propelled them toward the idea of film series and sequels. Furthermore these imperatives proved mutually reinforcing.

For Kristin Thompson, film franchises “... came about largely because the Hollywood studios were in the process of being bought up by large corporations and then by multinational conglomerates. The process began

in 1962, when MCA (Music Corporation of America) bought Universal.” (Thompson, 2008: 4) The Mirisch Company was wholly owned by the three brothers from its founding in 1957 to 1963, when it was acquired by United Artists. (UA had an output deal with the Mirisch companies from 1957 to 1974 and financed them to the extent of paying their overheads and core staff salaries. But UA had no ownership in any of the firms whilst they were producing entities, only acquiring them as libraries at the end of each contractual period.) The brothers responded by setting up several new production companies for each new contractual period, including Mirisch Films, Mirisch Productions and the Mirisch Corporation. Nevertheless, the Mirisch brothers did acquire some personal stakes both in exhibition (Variety, 13.6.62: 3) and in distribution, through stock in United Artists, which they received in exchange for their back catalogue (Variety, 20.2.63: 3) and, when UA was taken over by Transamerica, in Transamerica itself (Variety, 29.5.68: 3). When, in 1967, UA was bought by the Transamerica Corporation, a multi-media conglomerate, sequels and spin-offs may, as Thompson suggests, have been one possible method for increasing revenue from film properties beyond their original theatrical box office takings. “...the film industry had gone through a crisis in the late 1960s and was trying new strategies to regain its audience. Capitalizing on the success of certain titles would be one such strategy. Another reason might be that the old Hollywood production firms were in the process of being bought up by big conglomerates during that decade, and new business practices may have dictated an “efficient” use of narrative material.” (Thompson, 2008: 98-100) Such synergies across the now horizontally, rather than vertically, integrated industry might begin to explain this shift as the new multi-media conglomerates emerged. The Mirisch Company was never part of such a conglomerate, but its relationship to UA - and UA’s to Transamerica (from 1967) – may well have influenced them. Nevertheless, the impetus toward sequels and series was clearly with the company from the start.

Another indirect imperative on sequel production was “the insatiable demand of network television for feature films. As the number of movie nights increased and as rental prices skyrocketed, Hollywood became complacent. The thinking became that if a picture didn’t make it in the theatrical market, it would break even or earn a profit from the network television sale.” (Balio, 1990: 260) And sequels or film series were attractive acquisitions as they provided a more efficient solution to scheduling holes than individual films.ⁱⁱⁱ By the mid-1950s Television production had shifted from being largely live and New York based to being largely Hollywood-based and made on film. (Mann, 2007: 93-94) Subsequently - and not surprisingly - syndication rights for TV series

reruns became extremely valuable economically for the Hollywood studios but also hugely influential aesthetically. Ageing film stars and filmmakers could be conveniently redeployed to television, while new talent could be 'screen-tested' on the small screen.

In 1965, under the headline, "Sequel Trend May Bring Return To 'Series Films' of 1940 Vogue", Variety reported that "United Artists seems to be staging a one-company campaign to revive the concept of the "series film," so popular in the 1930s and 1940s with -such then-continuing characters as "The Hardy Family," "Tarzan," "Charlie Chan," et. al.

Although the series concept has since become the backbone of tv programming, UA has presently got the makings of several in the works." (Variety 24.2.65: 7) The article went on to identify the Bond series and the second Beatles film before discussing the three nascent franchises then being produced by the Mirisch Company. If series were proving the "backbone" of network TV, they could also provide a risk avoidance strategy for feature film independents, wrestling with the insecurities of the one-offness inherent in the package unit system. Even Wilder's *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* prompted similar trade press conjecture: "could this be the start of a new "Bond" series for UA?" (Variety 22.12.69: 2).

The Mirisch Company was quick to recognize TV both as a marketing medium for its films (*The Magnificent Seven* received a \$260,000 TV and radio campaign of 5000 10-60 second spot advertisements, prior to its initial release, Daily Variety 30.9.60: 24) and as a possible final destination for them. The Mirisch Company had a perspective on films which foregrounded their potential as 'episodes' because the company producing them was also simultaneously producing TV series. And because of its comparatively small size, the Mirisch Company was producing series episodes and films from within the same building, and deploying many of the same personnel across those productions.^{iv}

Christopher George, one of the stars of the Mirisch-Rich TV series, *Rat Patrol*, played the lead in the company's *The One Thousand Plane Raid* (1969). When it signed deals with bi-media stars like Janet Leigh or Robert Fuller it was able to offer both big and small screen possibilities. In 1963 the Mirisches had produced *The Great Escape*, which proved hugely successful and the opportunity to make further war films, or even a 'cycle' of 'British' second world war movies was extremely attractive. Mirisch employed John C. Champion to develop just such a cycle of such films. As Variety reported it, "writer-producer John C Champion's entire six-pix program with Mirisch-United Artists will be devoted to that war, and firm start dates and some key assignments already have been made on his first two." (Variety, 12.4.67: 4). But not only did they produce a "six-pix" British war movie cycle, mostly released as double bills, but one of

them was even described as a sequel. Their first war film made primarily for the British market, *633 Squadron* (1964), provided not only the blueprint for the subsequent *Mosquito Squadron* but also footage for many of its aerial and air raid sequences. According to *Variety*, “Next on producer Lew Rachmil’s B slate for Mirisch-UA will be ‘Mosquito Squadron’, to be filmed in England. Boris Sagal will direct pic, sequel to ‘633 Squadron’.” (*Daily Variety*, March 26 3.68: 1) In fact, the former film is not a sequel, sharing neither characters nor squadron with the latter production. But it clearly inspired the later film; indeed the entire cycle of Mirisch second world war films shared narrative similarities and, in several cases, stock footage.

Cinematic Sequels

This new industrial strategy saw films as, among other things, potential pilots – not unlike television pilots - of cinema series. More specifically, certain films could be seen as performing the function that pilots performed in television – as blueprints for characters, situations and story arcs – that could be reprised by sequels. And reversing that process, a film could also be deployed as the source material for a television pilot and, ideally, a TV series spin-off of its own. What Mann refers to as synergies between film and television thus include not only the possibility of spinning off films from TV series and TV series from films but also of interchanging the narrative grammars of those respective media, so that a film package could lead to cinematic sequels in just the same way that a small screen pilot could spawn a TV series. The simultaneous production of films and TV programmes at the Mirisch Company, and an inevitable awareness that the small screen was an increasingly important destination for feature films must also have had an impact on the impetus for properties with potential for series.

During the so-called studio era, the majors had both on screen and behind the camera talent on long term contracts, even renting them out on occasion to their rivals. Stars, screenwriters, directors and so on were seen as studio assets, the properties of the big five vertically integrated film businesses. In the post-studio world of independent production companies, talent was freelance but the films themselves became crucial properties – each company building up its own back catalogue (vitaly valuable for sale to syndication on the new medium of television). The Mirisch brothers, with their previous experience on Poverty Row, had already learned how to operate at much lower budgets than many of their rivals. Their years at Monogram and subsequently Allied Artists not only accustomed them to tight budgets and schedules but also to cinematic series production, through the *Bomba* series of films which Walter had initiated and overseen. In 1955 Harold Mirisch’s perspective on series films was already clear. “While “big” pictures are being stressed under

AA's production policy, Mirisch said that the company's "series" pictures such as *The Bowery Boys* would be continued for "unquestionably there's a definite distributor desire and need for these films." (*Variety*, 13.7.55: 4) Furthermore, AA's corporate parent, Monogram, had been one of the first companies to sell its features to TV, in 1951, several years before the majors began doing deals with the networks.

Before becoming a producer, Walter Mirisch had attended Harvard Business School – one of the first, if not the first, Hollywood producer to do so. At Harvard he learned, "...accounting and finance and merchandising and marketing and economics..." Mirisch, 2008: 20-21) In 1943 Mirisch received an Industrial Administrator qualification from Harvard and this paved the way for his subsequent career as a producer. His first job, though, was at the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation where he was "...assigned to a project involving the simplification of assembly-line procedures." (Mirisch, *ibid.*) He went on to take the idea of maximising output on minimum outlay, rationalizing assembly line processes, minimizing staff and outsourcing facilities into the film industry, first at Monogram/Allied Artists and later at the Mirisch brothers' own company. At Monogram, Mirisch was asked "How do we make this place work better? Do we have too many guards at the gate? Can we operate the editorial department differently? Should we move it off the lot?... We were constantly attempting to determine whether we were operating in the most cost-effective way possible." Mirisch applied the scientific management skills he had learned at Harvard to film production and, significantly, three Mirisch A decade before co-founding the Mirisch Company, Walter Mirisch went from being a salaried staffer at Monogram to a freelance producer, paid a fee for each production. "I soon realized that I could quickly starve to death while waiting for subsequent films to be approved. Now I understood the value of the series pictures to their producers. They provided a minimum subsistence income to producers who were trying to survive in a most unstable profession." (Mirisch, 2008: 27) Nevertheless, Hollywood in the late 1940s was far more stable than in the early 1960s, and the Mirisch Company quickly learned to benefit from the "minimum subsistence income" which series production – for TV and the cinema – could generate.

Henderson also notes the impact of independent production itself on serialization. He cites Janet Staiger's work on the package-unit system of production by which long-term contracts were replaced by one-off, film-by-film contracts. The end of the mass production of films by the majors, each of which had had their own distribution arms and cinema chains, resulted in the package unit system of production. (Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, 1985: 330) This was based on the idea that an independent production company organized each film project, from finance to hiring

cast and crew as well as equipment, facilities, locations and studios. “The major differences between this system of production and the prior one, the producer-unit system, were the transitory nature of the combination and the disappearance of the self-contained studio.” (Bordwell et al, 1985: 330) This institutionalization of short-termism seems to have helped seed a desire for securing the future, which in turn favoured sequels. (Henderson, 2014: 46) The Mirisch Company was one of the independent production companies to emerge in the wake of the 1948 Paramount decision and the divorcement of what had been the vertically integrated production and distribution arms of the film industry. Staiger describes “the industrial shift away from mass production and toward film-by-film financing and planning.” (Bordwell et al, 1985: 332) If an impetus toward film-by-film rather than firm by firm production was characteristic of the independent package producers, including Mirisch, then one way of resisting this intrinsic “one-off-ness” was to think in terms of series of films – whether cycles, star vehicles, or sequels. In such cases, whilst each individual film might require a unique contract with cast and crew, it would also be replicable for future films in the cycle, future vehicles with the same star, and future sequels that were the equivalent of filmic episodes in a cinematic series. Another characteristic of the package-unit system Staiger notes is profit-sharing, whereby major stars received a percentage of the profits in addition to their fee. (Bordwell et al, 1985: 334) One perhaps unforeseen side effect of the ‘star-replacement strategy’ operated by the Mirisches is exemplified by the casting changes in the three *Magnificent Seven* sequels and the replacement of Sellers with Arkin as the titular *Inspector Clouseau*, which neatly side-stepped such profit-sharing, whether or not this was a conscious strategy of replacing a recalcitrant or reluctant star. Sequels were a way of squeezing cinematic assets dry – by recycling not only characters, but also plots, and even occasionally dialogue. Thus the title of *They Call Me MISTER Tibbs* – is actually a line of dialogue from *In the Heat of the Night* – and was used as such in the trailer. Poitier’s contract also paved the way for further films in the series. “In the deal we had made with Sidney (Poitier) for *In the Heat of the Night*, he agreed to give us an option for two more pictures if we chose to make Virgil Tibbs movies.” (Mirisch, 2008: 293) Furthermore, as *Variety* reported, well before the first film was made, “Mirisch also has acquired tv rights to the Tibbs character for potential use in a tv series.” (*Variety*, 16.6.65: 18) The original *Magnificent Seven* was released in November 1960. It was re-released in 1961 and again, on double bills, in 1962. Meanwhile, in 1961, Mirisch had proposed a 90 minute TV Movie and a subsequent series to NBC. Sam Peckinpah was to be the executive producer and Sturges agreed to direct five episodes. UA refused to sign up to the deal,

however, and instead *The Magnificent Seven* set a record for the fastest post-theatrical A feature film to appear on TV when it premiered on Sunday February 3rd 1963 and was a huge small screen hit. In January 1964 a first cinematic sequel, *Return of the Seven* was announced. Eventually, three sequels were made - *Return of the Seven* (1966), *Guns of the Magnificent Seven* (1969) and *The Magnificent Seven Ride* (1972). In 1970 the Hollywood trade press reported “Upcoming triple feature – “The Magnificent 7” and its sequels “Return of the etc” and “Guns of-“ by the Mirii, being readied for UA theatre package billing, despite the fact that two “Sevens” will have been seen on tv by release time...” (Daily Variety, 17.11.70: 2) Two years later, Variety noted that the fourth film about *The Magnificent Seven*, “The Magnificent Seven Ride” was to be shot in Southern California while the first had been filmed in Mexico and the other two in Spain. (Variety, 23.2.72: 3) Walter Mirisch revealed that the final film’s budget of “around \$1000,000” (ibid) on a short, 30 day, schedule was less than that of any of the three previous pictures and that the film required fewer horses and riders than its predecessors too. If the first film had exemplified “runaway production” characteristic of cost-cutting indies, Variety wondered whether *The Magnificent Seven Ride* was “the vanguard of a ride into a “runback” era. (Variety, 23.2.72: 3) Three years later, in 1975, Walter Mirisch signed a deal with Universal TV and CBS-TV for an hour-long pilot for *The Magnificent Seven*. (In fact the long awaited *Magnificent Seven* TV series did not appear until 1998 and ran on CBS until 2000. It is credited to Trilogy Entertainment, MGM Television and The Mirisch Corporation. Walter Mirisch even got an Executive Producer credit on the recent remake of the film, but there was no corporate Mirisch credit.)

Diminishing Returns?

Both aesthetically and financially, a law of diminishing returns tends to operate on sequels, including the Mirisch’s, but the company proved adept at averting major losses by reducing the budgets and maximizing the long tail of their series films. That all three proved iconic enough to eventually spin-off successful TV series - only the first of which was produced by Mirisch - is one thing. That two of the three film series were largely filmed outside America and found a huge audience beyond the US box office is even more striking. According to Variety, by 1975 the four “Seven” films had generated world rentals theatrically of about \$25,000,000 and, strikingly, “...foreign rentals always outran domestic performance”. (Variety, 24.12.75: 1) *The Magnificent Seven* itself is reported as having taken about \$2,400,000 in the US and Canada and “a whopping \$11,300,000 in the foreign market.” (ibid) *Return of the Seven* in 1966 cost \$1.78 million to produce. The film took about \$1.6 million profit of \$3.2 million gross domestically and another \$3.4 million

internationally and came in 70th in the annual rankings by box office takings. (Hannan, 2015: 218) In 1967 Mirisch announced *Quest of the Magnificent Seven*, which was finally produced two years later, on a budget of 1.36 million, and released as *Guns of the Magnificent Seven*. It took \$1.5 million in rentals in the US but an additional \$2.5 million abroad. (Hannan, 2015: 218-219. Variety reports foreign rentals as \$2,200,000). *The Magnificent Seven Ride* had earned only \$700,000 domestically and international box office figures were unavailable at the time of Variety's report.

These sequels succeeded in re-promoting the original, which was regularly re-released and re-exhibited on double and treble bills with the new entries.^v Accounts show that *The Magnificent Seven* generated US rentals of 2.25 million and overseas rentals of 6.27 million amounting to an overall profit of 321,600 on first release. Of the three *Seven* sequels only *Return of the Seven* made a slight domestic profit, just \$37,000 on its initial release. *Guns of the Magnificent Seven* lost \$605,000 and *The Magnificent Seven Ride* \$21,000. However, network television and subsequent syndication netted *Return of the Seven* an extra \$2.23 million, *Guns of the Magnificent Seven* \$1.16 million and *The Magnificent Seven Ride* \$1.05 million. According to Hannan, taking theatrical release and television sales together, the first sequel was sitting on a profit of \$588,000, the second \$595,000 and the third \$236,000. (Hannan, 2015: 228). Domestic profits were transformed by TV sales, just as the international theatrical market increasingly rivaled and sometimes outweighed domestic takings. "The average price of a theatrical movie rose from \$100,000 for two network runs in 1961 to around \$800,000 by the end of 1967." (Litman, 316 in Kindem, 1982) *Hawaii* cost over \$14 million, but only grossed \$19 million while *In the Heat of the Night* cost \$2 million and initially grossed \$16 million. (Balio, 1987: 181 and 187) Of course, not all box office hits lent themselves to sequelisation – "because the conclusion of the original largely precluded future continuation, as with the tragedies *West Side Story* (1961) and *Doctor Zhivago* (1965)." (Henderson, 2014: 62) Similarly the protagonists of *The Great Escape* are almost all dead at the end. (According to Variety, "The rough cut of the World War II Film ... runs five and a half hours, and this will eventually be sliced to 240 minutes." (Variety, 31.10.62: 24) and, thus might conceivably have been released as a two parter.) This is also, of course, true of *The Magnificent Seven*, but did not prevent Mirisch from recruiting replacements for the fallen gunmen after each of the films in the series. There are, after all, only three survivors of the original seven in the first film and only one of the original actors opted to reprise his role. Indeed, the mortality of a high proportion of each seven facilitated rather than frustrated the production of sequels, as it allowed new,

cheaper contracts with talent than might have been possible with veterans of previous outings. Thus the disposability of the actors in the series, rather than their irreplaceability in new offerings, was one characteristic of the *Seven* films. Other blockbuster projects with a previous existence in the theatre or, indeed, real life, like *Fiddler on the Roof* or *Cast a Giant Shadow*, respectively, did not lend themselves to sequels, but clearly the Mirisches were quick to detect and exploit opportunities where they existed. (Henderson, 2014: 62)

There was a recession in Hollywood in 1969 and in response “the majors learned to offset the risks of production by adopting defensive production and marketing tactics. During the seventies, the majors themselves increasingly relied on sequels and series. Sequels solved a major promotion problem for the studios – how to make known to an audience what a film is about.” (Balio, 1990: 261) By the end of the first twenty-picture deal with UA, only five Mirisch productions had earned a profit – including *The Magnificent Seven*. (Balio, 1987: 177). Among the second twenty, *The Pink Panther* seemed such a surefire hit that the Mirisches had a sequel in the works before the original was released, but that sequel, a repurposed stage play transformed into an episode in the Clouseau series, lost money. (Balio, 1987: 184). The last, twenty eight-film, deal included more sequels. “Exploiting the blackpix trend and the Academy Award honors won by *In the Heat of the Night*, the Mirisches had produced two sequels starring Sidney Poitier ... At best, the two pictures just about broke even.” (Balio, 1987: 192) Of the final fourteen films owed to UA, all lost money except for *Fiddler on the Roof* and *The Magnificent Seven* sequels. (Balio, 1987: 194)

While *The Magnificent Seven* had been the first Mirisch production to eventually spawn a sequel, the first Mirisch sequel was actually *A Shot in the Dark* – the follow up to *The Pink Panther*. The script of the original initially centred on the jewel thief, played by David Niven, but according to Walter Mirisch, “the Clouseau character really took over and it became the centre of the film.” (Mirisch, quoted in Balio, 1987: 176) By 1964 the average weekly cinema attendance in the US was half that of what it had been in 1957 and consequently, companies that had seen their box office figures falling seized on anything that might maximize their revenues. (Maltby, 2003: 570) One such strategy was, of course, revisiting past successes and *The Pink Panther* was swiftly followed by a sequel as Blake Edwards and William Peter Blatty repurposed a screenplay they were already working on, based on a Leland Hayward stage production, to incorporate the Clouseau character, played again by Peter Sellers. According to Henderson’s definition, *A Shot in the Dark* is a spin-off rather than a sequel, as “...the spin-off tends to follow characters which were either previously subsidiary or parts of an ensemble...” (Henderson,

2014: 5). (The film fails to fully meet Henderson's criteria, however, as it is not a follow-up in another medium.) *The Pink Panther* took its title from the name given to the jewel that the Niven character was attempting to steal. In the sequel, Sellers' detective character took centre stage, but the pink panther remained in the audience's memory. There followed a four-year gap before *Inspector Clouseau* (1968) re-appeared, this time starring Alan Arkin as the bumbling detective. *Life* magazine, in 1966, wrote of this second sequel, that "*Inspector Clouseau* is, in its little way, a historic film, proving not only that the title character is now so well established that his name alone can lure us into the theatre, but that his spirit can survive delightfully unscathed the migration from Peter Sellers, in whom it resided so comfortably in *The Pink Panther* and *A Shot in the Dark*, to Alan Arkin." (cited in Mirisch, 2008: 169) By the time of Sellers' return to the role, Mirisch had lost their copyright on the character, which had reverted to UA.

Although contract staff numbers had fallen dramatically, sequels not only reduced the risk but also the pre-production budgets and schedules necessary for hiring freelance crews, finding locations, casting, hiring costumes and so on. The theme music of *The Magnificent Seven* finally won an Oscar nomination - second time around. The imperative to minimize risk (with a propensity toward pre-sold properties - literary, theatrical but primarily cinematic) encouraged a reliance on remakes, sequels, series and spin-offs. Thus not only is *The Magnificent Seven* a remake of *Seven Samurai* but it spawned three cinematic sequels and, eventually, a TV series. Similarly *The Pink Panther* functioned as a live action film and an animated TV series but also inaugurated a series. The first sequel, *A Shot in the Dark* (an adaptation of a play initially acquired as a vehicle for Marilyn Monroe) actually began life as an entirely distinct property from the *Pink Panther* series, before it was adopted and adapted for the Clouseau character. As *Variety* reported, "Mirisch Corp. prexy Harold Mirisch said the company is "determined to do a third picture to continue the Inspector Jacques Clouseau series." Mirisch, noting the enormous success of the James Bond character series, said this has "inspired us to pursue the idea of our own series," also revealing the imminent production of "Return of the 7", a sequel to its earlier successful "The Magnificent Seven". (*Variety*, 24.2.65: 7) Mirisch pointed out that *A Shot in the Dark* reversed the usual ratio of sequel grosses by taking more at the domestic box office than the original film. (*Variety*, Jan 20 1965: 4 and 20). Clearly, the Mirisches calculated the predicted grosses of sequels and cycles extremely carefully.

The Mirisch Company had been founded September 1st 1957 and in 1958 the William Morris Agency submitted the manuscript of James Michener's novel, *Hawaii*, prior to publication, to a number of possible

purchasers including the Mirisch Company with Fred Zinnemann attached to direct an adaptation. (Mirisch, 2008: 134) “Fred became convinced that the script had to be done as two films...He wanted to shoot both films continuously... In a sense it would have been a theatrical miniseries.” (Mirisch, 2008: 218-19) This was forty years before the first *Matrix* film and more than fifty before the first of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy! But the era of the TV mini-series was much closer and the bi-media approach of the Mirisches seems to have eclipsed their rivals. Mirisch acquired the movie rights to the book before publication, for “\$600,000 against 10% of the gross after break-even” (Balio, 1987: 181). According to *Variety*, this set an industry record. Once the 1000 page novel was published by Random House, it was on the bestseller lists for over a year – and was read by an estimated 100 million people, making it one of the most widely read novels of the period (Balio, 1987: 181). Zinnemann and screenwriter Daniel Taradash (who had collaborated with the director on *From Here to Eternity*) started work on a screenplay in 1960 but after a year, still struggling with the structure of the novel and its huge chronology (from colonization to independence) and ensemble cast of characters, Taradash was replaced by Dalton Trumbo. Two years later still, the pair proposed a four-hour feature to be shown in two parts. When UA vetoed this idea, Zinnemann left the project and was replaced by George Roy Hill, who had just directed *Toys in the Attic* for Mirisch. The Mirisch Company resolved to focus the (first) film on the first half of the book, which dramatizes the period between 1820 and 1841. Shot on location not only in Hawaii itself but also in Tahiti, Norway and New England, the film was budgeted at \$10 million but cost another \$4 million. It grossed almost \$19 million, however, the highest box office for any of the films in the Mirisch Company’s second, twenty-picture, deal with United Artists. (Balio, 1987: 181) But the second half of the novel remained to be exploited. “I had always felt that if *Hawaii* was successful, we should make a follow-up film utilizing the excised material.” (Mirisch, 2008: 291) The subsequent film, *The Hawaiians*, starring Charlton Heston, picked up the story from the second half of Michener’s book, with the development of the islands in the 20th century. *Variety* variously referred to it as “the Mirisch freres’ sequel, “The Hawaiians”” (4.11.68: 2) and “sequel to the earlier “Hawaii” (21.5.69: 28) but also as “not strictly a sequel to company’s 1966 “Hawaii”” (*Variety*, 4.10.68:19). This belated follow-up was finally released in 1970 but had little of the first film’s success at the box office or with the critics. At an Xmas 1969 party in Hollywood, Charlton Heston was reportedly “Talking the third “Hawaii” pic” (*Daily Variety*, 22.12.69: 2) but this joke only reaffirms the role sequels played in the Mirisch strategy.

Television Series

Whilst the company was developing Hawaii, it was already in production on the first of its TV series. Having been founded on September 1st 1957, by January 1958 the Mirisch Company was already announcing TV projects. As *Variety* reported, “Yul Brynner and Walter Mirisch, in inking multi-motion picture deals with UA, stated they would also join UA in TV projects. It’s considered likely that both Brynner and Mirisch will do episodes for UA TV’s projected anthology series, tentatively titled “UA Playhouse”” (*Daily Variety*, 1.1.58: 23) But anthology series, by definition, have neither returning characters nor reusable sets – the economies of scale of conventional series production. By early the following year, the Mirisch Company had signed two new production deals, this time with NBC, for a series, *Wichita Town*, and another western, though this time only a pilot, *The Iron Horseman*. (*Daily Variety*, 11.3.59: 32) Indeed, as well as the feature films for which it is most remembered, the Mirisch Company also (co-) produced a number of TV series: *Wichita Town* (NBC 1959-60), *Peter Loves Mary* (NBC 1960-61), *Hey Landlord* (NBC 1966-67), *Rat Patrol* (ABC 1966-68) and *The Pink Panther Show* (NBC 1969).

Thus the first Mirisch ‘series’ was not for the cinema but for the small screen – *Wichita Town* – though, significantly, this too was a kind of cinematic spin-off. Walter Mirisch had produced the B Western, *Wichita* (1955) about Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson, for Allied Artists starring Joel McCrea as Earp. In 1959 the Mirisch Company produced *The Gunfight at Dodge City* in which McCrea played Masterson. The series, *Wichita Town*, starred McCrea and his son Jody. Though the names of the characters they played were fictional, they were loosely based on Masterson and Earp. (Jody's character's name was even "Ben Masters," allowing for a hint at the actual historical figures they couldn't name, because Hugh O'Brian and Alan Dinehart were already starring in a dramatization of the story of the Earp/Masterson friendship on ABC with *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp*.) In 1967 Mirisch produced *Hour of the Gun*, directed by John Sturges which was a return to the story of Wyatt Earp - after the gunfight at the OK Corral (Sturges had directed a film about the legendary gunfight for Paramount in 1957 – *Gunfight at the OK Corral*). Balio refers to *Hour of the Gun* as “a follow-up” (Balio, 1987: 185) rather than a strict sequel, for Sturges, since the entire cast, if not the characters they played, was new.

Wichita Town was swiftly followed by the production of a pilot for a series, spun off from the company’s first major hit, 1959’s *Some Like it Hot*.^{vi} The unsold pilot episode was produced by The Mirisch Company in 1961 and starred Vic Damone and Tina Louise. Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis made brief cameo appearances as Daphne and Josephine in a hospital scene at the beginning of the pilot, with Lemmon being treated

for an impacted tooth and the pair deciding to have plastic surgery to escape the mob forever. The pilot got close enough to commission as an NBC series for Mirisch to clear copyright in the title for TV. (Variety, 19.4.61: 3) A second TV series, *Peter Loves Mary*, was also produced, in co-production with Four Star. Another western pilot, *The Iron Horsemen*, was also made, but wasn't commissioned as a series. "Wichita Town... was dropped after 26 weeks and the Mirisches dropped out of television." (Daily Variety, 31.3.65: 10)

1965 witnessed the Mirisches' dramatic reentry into TV. As Variety noted, the Mirisch Company in partnership with Lee Rich, "marked the end of one full year in tv ... with a record unmatched by any producing company in tv. Three shows, its entire output for the year, sold and on network schedule next fall.... His shows for next season are wellbaited with sponsorship. Proctor & Gamble bought all of "Hey Landlord", Reynolds Tobacco took half of "Rat Patrol" and NBC is having no difficulty selling its third sale, "The Super Bwoing Show", an animated cartoon for Saturday afternoon." (Variety 30.3.65: 36). *Rat Patrol* was to prove the most successful of these, though it had been developed as *The Trojan Horse*, an "hour-long adventure series which takes place behind German lines in World War II" (Daily Variety, 20.5.65: 1).

Despite the lack of success of the *Some Like it Hot* pilot, there continued to be synergies between Mirisch films and TV series. The company's sitcom, *Hey Landlord*, may have only run for a single season but seems to have helped inspire (or been inspired by the source material for) their feature, *The Landlord*, which had the same premise – and premises – a run-down New York brownstone owned by a wealthy young white man. While this was far from unique as a cinematic spin-off, it is indicative of the Mirisch Company's eye for seriality and its ability to market television seriality in/as cinema, as well as seeing one-off feature films as reproducible on both small and big screens. In the summer of 1965, under the headline 'TV Rights Along With Feature Deals, Mirisch Thought for Future', Variety reported that the Mirisch Company was thinking about series, for both media, in tandem with their new production partner.

"The Mirisch Co. plans to acquire tv rights in addition to theatrical film rights, whenever possible, in acquisition of properties for its production slate for the future. This was revealed by Lee Rich, prexy of Mirisch-Rich Television Productions... Rich said he thought most theatrical film properties could be converted into series, and that the Mirisch brothers agreed with him." (Variety, June 30th 1965: 29) One of these projects became *Rat Patrol* - which, indeed, ended up both as a TV series and, by combining three consecutive episodes, a feature film, released theatrically outside America as *Massacre Harbor* (Variety, 17.8.68). The three

episodes were originally transmitted as *The Last Harbor Raid* (ABC-TV 19.12.67, 26.12.67 and 2.1.68).

In October 1966 *Variety* reported that they had completed production on the first *Rat Patrol* series. Filming had run from July 5th to October 8th and “the total output came to 14 half-hour segments, a trio of episodes for a three-parter, a and a feature film assembled from those three episodes” Indeed, *Variety* was explicit about the synergies between the two media. “*Rat Patrol* will significantly influence television and filmmaking” *Variety* reported, adding that “The program, to begin with, tested and proved that tv series can be made in Spain at a production rhythm comparable to Hollywood... The fact remains that 17 segments and three-parter film called “*The Rat Patrol*” were produced in three months ... Of significance is the close creative span between telefilming and motion picture, once the organization is moving in high gear.” (*Variety*, 19.10.66: 43) The synergies between TV series production and cinematic sequels (and assemblies) were clearly apparent to the company.

The downside of the discovery of such textual synergies between the two media, however, was the revelation of their contextual differences in terms of finance. The series was deficit financed which meant that Mirisch-Rich suffered “substantial losses” on it and, once renewed for a second season on ABC, the company had to continue to deficit finance production, as the budget advanced by UA never met its costs. (*Variety* 31.6.67: 26). The previous week, Marvin Mirisch, the company’s executive vice president, acknowledged that Mirisch was undergoing an “agonizing reappraisal” regarding the viability of a future in TV, whilst denying exiting the medium altogether. However, Rich, who had spearheaded the company’s small screen ventures left Mirisch-Rich Productions to take up a position as VP at the Leon Burnett Agency. (25.5.67: 1) Walter Mirisch claimed that the company wanted to continue in series production, but preferred to prioritise one-off specials or three-camera sitcoms, which were cheaper and where there would not be substantial losses. Although their sitcom, *Hey Landlord*, had been axed there had not been heavy costs involved. “But no profit was racked up, either, and the future of 32 segs in syndication is a question mark.” (*Daily Variety*, 25.5.67: 10) As for *Rat Patrol*, Mirisch admitted the company had “substantial losses” on the series which had been renewed for another season on ABC. “If the series is on three or four years and eventually gets a good distribution setup, the series may come out okay, he said.” (*Variety*, 31.5.67: 26)

Animation

When *The Pink Panther* was released in 1963, one of its most celebrated aspects was the title sequence. The producers had commissioned an animated sequence from Fritz Freleng and the result proved so popular

that an animated short film, 1964's *The Pink Phink*, was produced. In 1964 a full-page advertisement in *Variety* announced:

“YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE LAST OF THE PINK PANTHER! That egocentric, rubicund critter who made such a sensational film debut in the main titles of Blake Edwards' “The Pink Panther” returns to the screen as the hero (?) of a new one-reel color cartoon series presented by the Mirisch Organization, Geoffrey Productions and DePatie Freleng Enterprises.” (*Variety*, 12.8.64: no page number) The following year, another full-page advertisement in *Variety*, announced: “FIRST I WAS A MOVIE TITLE THEN I BECAME A MOVIE STAR NOW I'M AN ACADEMY AWARD NOMINEE. THE PINK PHINK, THE VERY FIRST SUBJECT IN THE NEW PINK PANTHER COLOR CARTOON SERIES.” (*Variety*, 25.3.65, no page number)

The Pink Phink duly won the Academy Award for Animated Short Film. The animated titles were reused in subsequent features. In 1969 *The Pink Panther* made his first appearance on television in his own show. Each thirty-minute episode was comprised of two animated shorts, shown on Saturday mornings for a decade until the series ended in 1979. In 1968 DePatie Freleng were reportedly making a new theatrical cartoon series for Mirisch-UA, *The Ant and the Aardvark*, to be released monthly. (*Variety*, 8.5.68:10)

Memory

Eventually, three sequels to *The Magnificent Seven* were made - *Return of the Seven* (1966), *Guns of the Magnificent Seven* (1969) and *The Magnificent Seven Ride* (1972) but Sturges, McQueen and Wallach (who was invited back to play the uncle of the Calvera character) all turned down the idea of revisiting their roles in the initial production. Brynner alone agreed to take part again – and he only signed up for the first sequel; Robert Fuller was cast as Vin. The role of Chico (played by Horst Buchholz in the original) was taken by Julian Mateos and that of Petra (Rosenda Monteros in the first film) was played by Elisa Montes. George Kennedy replaced Brynner as Chris in the second sequel; the third and final sequel recast the role again, this time with Lee Van Cleef.

Henderson notes that road-show era hits, like *The Magnificent Seven*, often used large ensemble casts. For any sequel to a multiple star film, “Given that the majority of these stars were no longer under long-term contract, reassembling all or even some of them presented a major logistical headache.” (Henderson, 2014: 62) For *The Magnificent Seven*'s sequels, the death of the majority of the ensemble in each episode facilitated rather than frustrated such a reassembly, as new “sevens” were easily recruited. Meanwhile the gap between episodes perhaps erased or at least blurred the memories of audiences about the identities of the survivors. But advertising was able to refresh viewer memories. The

trailer for *Return of the Seven* begins with the words, “They rode into screen history with *The Magnificent Seven*. Now they ride on to greater adventure in *Return of the Magnificent Seven*.”

In the first sequel, *Return of The Seven*, Chico is wounded trying to defend his village against (another) bandit attack. His wife Petra goes in search of Chris and finds him at a bullfight where, fortuitously, he has just bumped into Vin. Chris and Vin team up and recruit another five men. Of this seven, the eventual survivors are Chris, Vin, Chico and Colby (Warren Oates). *Guns of The Magnificent Seven* followed with another Mexican, Max, seeking Chris out to help rescue an imprisoned rebel leader. “All I know is he’s a friend and his name is Chris.” When Chris saves the life of a horse thief about to be hung, a gunman shouts, “I know you Chris. A lot of people know you. Mostly sheriffs!” So Chris is by now famous, even infamous, but on the wrong side of the law. When Max approaches them after a shootout in town, he says, “Hello Chris. You were magnificent. Both of you.” Not only is Chris famous, therefore, he is also already “magnificent”. Chris decides to accept the challenge. “I need help. More men. Six men. Not enough to cause suspicion. Just enough to do the job.” Max replies “My cousin says seven is a lucky number for you.” Audiences are always already aware of the film’s place in a series in which a magnificent seven gunmen will triumph, against the odds. Of the assembled seven only Chris, Max and another gunman, Levy, survive the final gunfight.

In *The Magnificent Seven Ride*, Chris is a newly married Marshall. When approached by an old friend, Jim, to help yet another Mexican village, he says, “I’ve crossed that border three times to fight bandits. I ain’t going down there again.” During the three previous films Chris has indeed already crossed that river three times (in both directions). However, when Jim reminds him of their exploits together - “Remember that first time? Seven of us got 350 dollars. Fifty bucks apiece” - we recall that there was no Jim in the first Seven adventure – or indeed any other - nor any previous mention of another Mexican skirmish in the series. Furthermore, if such an escapade with Jim had taken place, then Chris would already have crossed that border four times. When Chris initially refuses his request for help, Jim prompts “Maybe some of the others?” But none of the names Chris mentions refer to anyone we have previously encountered in the series. These sequels seem to suffer from a filmic false memory syndrome – a kind of ‘cinemamnesia’.

By this time, the collective memory of the series has become so blurred that there is virtually no reliable shared narrative of the seven left to exploit – or repeat. In future, such series would be far more rigorously and rigidly enforced, with a combination of blockbuster budgets and auteur authority (most successfully in *The Godfather* trilogy and the *Star*

Wars franchise). Trilogies like *The Matrix*, or *Lord of the Rings* as well as the *Star Wars* films have been beneficiaries of a pre-production plan incorporating multiple episodes. This doesn't ever seem to have been the case with any of the Mirisch sequels. Each film was a one-off, exploiting a familiar title or character or situation, but never as part of a self-conscious strategy, within which several spin-offs had been simultaneously conceived. Instead, the *Panther*, *Seven* and *Tibbs* sequels were all spawned individually. Poitier had an option for sequels films in his contract, but neither the writers nor the directors nor even fellow cast members were reunited in them. This was part of what was to change as franchises subsequently became more imbricated in the economic logic of production.

In Mirisch sequels, characters (and actors) change inexplicably from one film to the next. Ironically, in the unsold pilot to *Some Like it Hot*, Mirisch had prematurely played with this idea, by using the plot device of plastic surgery to transform the leads from Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis into Vic Damone and Tina Louise.^{vii} In the company's subsequent cinematic sequels, on the other hand, in which one actor is casually replaced with another, no such deus ex machina is summoned to post-rationalize the changed cast or character. *The Magnificent Seven's* Chris was played by Yul Brynner, George Kennedy and Lee Van Cleef. Chico is played by Horst Bucholz in *The Magnificent Seven* but by another actor in *Return of the Seven*. Vin, McQueen in the original, is played by Robert Fuller in *Return*. Colby is one of the three survivors in *Return*, but in *Guns of the Magnificent Seven* that name is given to a villain, played by an entirely different actor – though no mention is made of Chris's former comrade with the same surname. Similarly, the Clouseau character was married in *The Pink Panther*, but is living in a bachelor apartment in the sequel, *A Shot in the Dark*, with no mention of his marital status. At the end of *The Pink Panther*, Clouseau was sentenced to jail, but in *A Shot in the Dark* that jail sentence seems to have been forgotten. Clouseau is played by Peter Sellers in the first two films but replaced by Alan Arkin in the third. (Sellers returned to the role when the franchise was revived by United Artists.)

In the Heat of the Night was released in 1967 and by the following year Sidney Poitier was, albeit briefly, America's top box office star and the film made ripples for its depiction of racism and for Tibbs' refusal to turn the other cheek in the face of racial violence. By comparison, however, *They Call Me MISTER Tibbs* (1970) and *The Organization* must have seemed anachronistic in their essentially colour-blind focus and framing narratives. But these sequels aren't merely bleached in comparison with their predecessor and progenitor, they are virtually brainwiped. The discontinuities identified above in the *Seven* and *Pink Panther* films

become biographical in the Tibbs trilogy. *In the Heat of the Night* (1967) tells us that its protagonist, police detective Virgil Tibbs, (Sidney Poitier) works for the Philadelphia force and that he is unmarried. In the sequel *They Call Me MISTER Tibbs!*, however, Tibbs is working for the San Francisco force ('We've got 12 good years invested in you', notes his police chief boss) and is married with two children, one of whom, his son Andy, appears close to adolescence. (Henderson, 2014: 4)

Writing about more recent films, the late Mark Fisher notes that "...it is not surprising that memory disorders should have become the focus of cultural anxiety" (Fisher, 58) and cites *Memento*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and the *Bourne* films. "Bereft of personal history, Bourne lacks *narrative* memory, but retains what we might call *formal* memory: a memory – of techniques, practices, actions – that is literally embodied in a series of physical reflexes and tics." (Fisher, 2009: 58). This sheds unexpected light on the Mirisch sequels – which seem to suffer from a similar amnesia. Fisher sees this as symptomatic of a postmodern, post-Fordist culture - "a culture that is excessively nostalgic, given over to retrospection, incapable of generating any authentic novelty." (Fisher, 2009: 59). This is both true and untrue of the Mirisch films – it is not (just) their fictional characters but their actual makers – indeed, the films themselves, which seem oblivious or ignorant of prior outings in their respective series. The Mirisch moment was on the crest of post-Fordism in Hollywood, as vertical integration was being replaced by horizontal integration and studio staff positions were being transformed into freelance ones. And while a film culture – and audience – content with sequels may or may not be 'excessively nostalgic', what is pertinent is Fisher's phrase about "a memory – of techniques, practices, actions – that is literally embodied in a series of physical reflexes and tics." Thus, in *The Magnificent Seven*, the seven heroes are identified almost exclusively in terms of their techniques and tics – their professional specialisms. The six men Chris recruits in each of the sequels also all have their particular, individuating prowess and specific skillset. The series re-echoes, each time rather more faintly, the initial assembly of the heavily outnumbered team, the journey, a first skirmish with, preparation for and then final battle with the antagonists.

Another commentator has noted that since the mid-1970s the reception of American films can be characterized by a "disrupted and interrupted viewing that, to put it simply, remembers moments and images but not motivations." (Corrigan, 1991: 169) And this in turn has impacted, he argues, on the textures of the films themselves. Perhaps the detectable decline in causality and increasing reliance on narrative recycling, exemplified by Mirisch productions from the mid-sixties on, is an early symptom of this condition. Alternatively, this textual tic may be no more

than a characteristic of the television series with its episodic amnesia, by which each new adventure erases the past, being absorbed by the features which were often produced, as with Mirisch, by the same companies, on the same sound stages and increasingly by the same personnel. If the series is the gift that keeps on giving, then part of that productivity seems to have necessitated forgetting the previous production.

Henderson notes that from the mid-fifties to the mid-seventies "... the role of the Hollywood sequel was in flux ... neither what it had been in the years of vertical integration, nor what it would go on to become in the late 1970s, as horizontal integration became a fact of Hollywood life." (Henderson, 2014: 56) This perhaps explains the less than assembly-line smoothness with which sequels, specifically those produced by the Mirisch brothers, whose deal with UA precisely corresponds with this period, were characterized. Their sequels were, in general, afterthoughts, rather than preconceived series. Nevertheless, the Mirisch companies were experimenting with serial, series and sequel forms throughout the 1960 and into the 1970s in that transitional period before the Movie Brats. It was among those companies that re-invented the sequel, well over a decade before *Jaws*, *The Godfather* and *Star Wars* made them famous as a long tail strategy for the studios in the 1970s. And it showed the way in which film franchises and cinematic series (or sequels) could provide synergies between film and television, with productions like *The Pink Panther* and *The Magnificent Seven* (and *In the Heat of the Night* - which spawned a successful TV series of its own, but only after the rights to the original had reverted to UA) - not to mention *Wichita Town*, *Rat Patrol* and even an unlikely pilot for a *Some Like it Hot* series. The Mirisch companies helped pioneer the monetisation of their films as potential prequels or pilots for series (both in the cinema, as sequels and on television as spin-off series). They were thus among the first of the post-Paramount Decision independents to see the long tail, bi-media potential of sequels.

As an independent set up in 1957, the Mirisch Company came into existence less than two years after the first deals were done between the major Hollywood studios and TV networks in 1955. This in turn meant that Mirisch was structured to be able to produce both feature films and television series – from the outset. It did not have to adapt or transform itself in order to turn from one audio-visual medium to another or one form of storytelling to another. It was always already prepared to produce for both media either single films or series 'episodes'. Furthermore, the capacity to produce TV series meant that the Mirisch Company and its successors had in their DNA, or institutional infrastructure, the ability to produce episodic narratives on an assembly line. This may have begun as a capacity to make episodic television, with recurring characters and

situations, but cannot but have raised the possibility of applying the same ‘repetition with difference’ framework to cinematic storytelling. The industrial infrastructure for fully fledged film franchises may only have arrived in the 1970s and 1980s, and perhaps needed the authorial imprimatur and box office impetus provided by major filmmakers like Coppola, Lucas and Spielberg to gather momentum – and respectability. However it was in the late 1950s and 1960s that the seeds for that new Hollywood were sown and a new imperative toward synergy emerged from the ashes of the studio era, ushering in new forms of serial and series production for the big screen. The Mirisches were on the crest of that wave.

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Filmography

Chronology of Mirisch cinematic sequels (films inaugurating series are in **bold**):

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN (1960)

Some Like it Hot (un-transmitted TV pilot) (1961)

THE PINK PANTHER (1963)

A Shot in the Dark (1964)

The Return of the Seven (1966)

HAWAII (1966)

Rat Patrol (The three-part story "*The Last Harbor Raid*" was transmitted on 19.12.66, 26.12.66 and 2.1.67). The three-parter was then re-edited and released as a feature film entitled *Massacre Harbor* in 1968.

IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT (1967)

Inspector Clouseau (1968)

Guns of the Magnificent Seven (1969)

They Call Me MISTER Tibbs (1970)

The Hawaiians (1970)

The Organization (1971)

The Magnificent Seven Ride (1972)

Filmography

The Apartment. Dir. Billy Wilder. UA. 1960. Film

Bomba the Jungle Boy. Dir. Ford Beebe. Monogram Pictures. 1949. Film

The Bowery Boys. Dir. George Nichols. Keystone Film Company. 1914. Film

Cast a Giant Shadow. Dir. Melville Shavelson. UA. 1966. Film

Doctor Zhivago. Dir. David Lean. MGM. 1965. Film

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind. Dir. Michel Gondry. Universal. 2004. Film

Fiddler on the Roof. Dir. Norman Jewison. UA. 1971. Film

From Here to Eternity. Dir. Fred Zinnemann. Columbia. 1953. Film

The Godfather. Dir. Francis Ford Coppola. Paramount. 1972. Film

The Great Escape. Dir. John Sturges UA. Film

The Gunfight at Dodge City. Dir. Joseph M Newman. UA. 1958. Film

Gunfight at the OK Corral. Dir. John Sturges. Paramount. 1957. Film

Guns of the Magnificent Seven. Dir. Paul Wendkos. 1969. UA. Film

Hawaii. Dir. George Roy Hill. UA. 1966. Film

The Hawaiians. Dir. Tom Gries. UA. 1970. Film

Hour of the Gun. Dir. John Sturges. UA. 1967. Film

Inspector Clouseau. Dir. Bud Yorkin. UA. 1968. Film

In The Heat of the Night. Dir. Norman Jewison. UA. 1967. Film

Irma La Douce. Dir. Billy Wilder. UA. 1963. Film

Jaws. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Universal. 1975. Film

The Landlord. Dir. Hal Ashby. UA. 1971. Film

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring. Dir. Peter Jackson
New Line Cinema 2001. Film
The Magnificent Seven. Dir. John Sturges. UA. 1960. Film
The Magnificent Seven Ride. Dir. George McCowan. UA. 1972. Film
Massacre Harbor Dir. John Peyser. UA.1968. Film
The Matrix. Dirs. Laurence Wachowski and Andrew Wachowski. Warner
Bros. 1999. Film
Memento. Dir. Christopher Nolan. Newmarket. 2000. Film
The Organization. Dir. Don Medford. UA. 1971. Film
The Pink Panther. Dir. Blake Edwards. UA. 1963. Film
The Pink Phink. Dirs. Fritz Freleng and Hawley Pratt. UA. 1964. Film
The Return of the Seven. Dir. Burt Kennedy. UA. 1966. Film
The Russians are Coming, The Russians are Coming. Dir. Norman
Jewison. UA. 1966. Film
Seven Samurai. Dir. Akira Kurosawa. Toho Company. 1954. Film
A Shot in the Dark. Dir. Blake Edwards. UA. 1964 Film
Some Like it Hot. Dir. Billy Wilder UA. 1959 Film
Star Wars. Dir. George Lucas. TCF. 1977. Film
They Call Me MISTER Tibbs Dir. James. R. Webb. UA. 1970. Film
The Thomas Crown Affair. Dir. Norman Jewison. UA. 1968. Film
Toys in the Attic. Dir. George Roy Hill. UA. 1963. Film
West Side Story. Dirs. Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins UA. 1961. Film
Wichita. Dir. Jacques Tourneur. AA. 1955. Film

Television

Guns for Hire: The making of The Magnificent Seven. Channel Four.
13.5.00
Hey Landlord. NBC. 11.9.66-14.5.67.
The Iron Horseman. TV Pilot. NBC. 1959.
The Last Harbor Raid. *Rat Patrol*. ABC. 19.12.66, 26.12.66 and 2.1.67.
The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp. ABC. 1955-61.
The Magnificent Seven. CBS. 1998-2000.
Nobody's Perfect. BBC2. 16.4.01.
Peter Loves Mary. NBC. 12.10.60-31.5.61.
The Pink Panther Show. NBC. 1969.
Rat Patrol. ABC. 12.9.66-16.4.68.
Some Like it Hot. TV pilot. NBC. 1961.
The Super Six. NBC 1966-69
Wichita Town. NBC. 30.9.1959-6.4.60.

Animation

The Ant and the Aardvark (1969)
The Pink Phink (et al) (1964-)

End Notes

ⁱ Before becoming an academic I spent twenty years as a producer making arts and history programmes for the BBC and Channel 4 in the UK, working on one-off documentaries, series and three-parters (documentary series which are effectively actually 'serials').

ⁱⁱ For more information about the Mirisch Company, see Balio, 1987; Mirisch, 2008 and Kerr, 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱ This continues to be the case. In 2000 I was commissioned to produce a documentary for Channel 4 in the UK about *The Magnificent Seven* to complement a screening of the film and its sequels. Subsequently the documentary was included as part of a DVD Box Set alongside all four films.

^{iv} Walter Mirisch describes appointing the editor Richard Heermance to run the TV operation for him. Heermance had edited Mirisch's *Man in the Net* and had been supervising editor on their films *Fort Massacre*, *Man of the West*, *Gunfight at Dodge City* and *Cast a Long Shadow* and went on to supervise production on their series *Peter Loves Mary* and *Wichita Town* and *The Iron Horseman* pilot and thus provided continuity and corporate identity for their output across both media.

^v *Guns for Hire: The Making of The Magnificent Seven* was transmitted on Channel 4 on 13.5.00 as part of a Magnificent Seven season. Such groups of productions with shared copyright ownership continue to circulate on new media platforms, proof of the long tail the Mirisch Company somehow sensed.

^{vi} I produced and directed a BBC2 documentary about the making of the film, entitled *Nobody's Perfect* and transmitted on 16.4.01. I interviewed surviving cast and crew members, including Walter Mirisch himself.

^{vii} Plastic surgery is also a key dramatic device in another Mirisch production, *Return from the Ashes*.