

[FREE] Fatal Subtraction: The Inside Story of Buchwald V. Paramount

Fatal Subtraction: The Inside Story of Buchwald V. Paramount

Pierce O'Donnell, Dennis McDougal

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Pierce O'Donnell, Dennis McDougal : Fatal Subtraction: The Inside Story of Buchwald V. Paramount before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fatal Subtraction: The Inside Story of Buchwald V. Paramount:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy CustomerThis should be required reading for screenwriters and producers.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Feel the book could've been edited a little better in that it was repetitive and drawn out at ...By Larry GrigsbyExhaustive account of the Coming To America movie lawsuits. Feel the book could've been edited a little better in that it was repetitive and drawn out at times.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fatal SubtractionBy TallordersA must read for anyone wanting to try and understand the vagaries of the studio accounting system and how you can get screwed even when your film is profitable.

An updated edition of the best-selling book about the workings of Hollywood recounts the suit against Paramount Pictures by humorist Art Buchwald, who claimed Paramount stole the story to the film, *Coming to America*, from him. Original.

From Publishers WeeklyHailed as a landmark victory for writers, Art Buchwald's 1988 lawsuit against Paramount Pictures is the subject of this lengthy, compulsively readable brief written by O'Donnell, the Los Angeles lawyer who represented Buchwald, and Los Angeles Times reporter McDougal. Buchwald and his partner, producer Alan

Bernheim, claimed that Paramount had failed to give them credit for the original story of Eddie Murphy's 1988 hit movie *Coming to America*. Though O'Donnell and McDougal focus on procedural aspects and the courtroom drama, they blow the lid off the major Hollywood studios's sleazy accounting practices, which have enabled them to deprive creative talent of millions of dollars in royalties by claiming that top-grossing films earned zero net profits. Murphy, given credit for the story line in the film, is portrayed here as "a talented human being . . . reduced to a commodity." The authors also unreel withering profiles of director John Landis, Paramount executive Martin Davis, Arsenio Hall and others. Photos. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* One of 1988's biggest movie hits was *Coming to America*, which starred Eddie Murphy. One of Hollywood's biggest lawsuits ever soon ensued when humorist Art Buchwald and his partner, Alain Bernheim, sued Paramount, claiming that they had actually created the story upon which the movie was based. O'Donnell, their attorney, and McDougal, a Los Angeles Times investigative reporter, have turned this legal battle into a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at how Hollywood really works and how major litigation really takes place. Detailing the dispute from the very beginning to the very bitter end, the authors show how legal strategies evolved (e.g., why the plaintiffs sued for breach of contract, not plagiarism) and the courtroom machinations that culminated in a trial to determine how a blockbuster movie could somehow fail to turn any profit, according to the studio. The strongest depictions, however, are of the cast of characters--sympathetic plaintiffs, overworked attorneys, witnesses both helpful and otherwise, and studio executives who were often either devious or greedy, if not both. Very highly recommended for all collections. (Photos not seen).- Sally G. Waters, Stetson Law Lib., St. Petersburg, Fla. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Kirkus sBoff Hollywood trial epic in which Art Buchwald, his screenwriter/producer partner Alan Bernheim, and legal whiz Pierce O'Donnell battle Paramount Pictures over Buchwald's part in the script of Eddie Murphy's dizzyingly successful Coming to America. After Buchwald goes to the Capawock Theater on Martha's Vineyard to see Paramount's new Eddie Murphy comedy (about an African king who comes to the States, finds a wife in Queens, and takes her back home to marry), he arms his sling with stones and goes looking for Paramount. The story, in part, is taken from a treatment Buchwald sold to Paramount, which then spent over a half million on scripts (the first being by Bernheim) for this Murphy vehicle. Aside from cash, Buchwald-Bernheim were offered points in the picture's net profits, should it be made and there be such profits. Then the top execs who bought Buchwald's story and put it into development moved to other companies and the Buchwald/Bernheim script was dropped. The authors resold it, to Warner Brothers, but then Paramount announced *Coming to America* and Warner dropped its flick as too similar to the new Murphy vehicle. Enter O'Donnell (writing here with Los Angeles Times entertainment reporter McDougal), whose legal firm breaks a rule and takes the case on contingency. Paramount and its legal team deny any theft of Buchwald's ideas but then find themselves defending Hollywood's net-profits clause, which allows a studio to deduct its overall losses from its hits' earnings. Huge stars get points in gross profits, but, through creative accounting, small-time creators are denied rewards, despite a film's massive returns. Here, the case's legal stages are spellbinding and not excessively detailed. Don't miss Buchwald's drolleries to the servile Writers Guild of America or Eddie Murphy's toothy two-day deposition, though he's a no-show at the clause-busting trial. You'll never eat net profits in these contracts again. (Bw photographs--not seen.) -- Copyright 1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*