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Please cite the Published Version

Chambers, Amy (2021) Screen Queens. Book Review: Women vs Hollywood. Immediate Media Company. BBC.

Publisher: Immediate Media Company. BBC

Version: Accepted Version

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Additional Information: Book review of Women vs Hollywood: The Fall and Rise of Women in Film by Helen O'Hara (2021) Little, Brown Book Group. ISBN: 9781472144430

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Chambers, AC. (2021). Screen Queens [book review: *Women vs Hollywood*]. *BBC History Magazine.* March, p.86.

Screen Queens [book review: *Women vs Hollywood: The Fall and Rise of Women in Film* by Helen O'Hara, Little Brown, 368 pages, £18.99]

AMY CHAMBERS recommends a new title examining the role of women in the film industry, and how their myriad achievements – both on and off-camera – have been sorely overlooked.

There is battle going on in Hollywood; women directors are on the rise and they want Hollywood *back*. Film critic Helen O'Hara's newest book is part of a wave of women-written work uncovering the forgotten histories and triumphs of women filmmakers throughout film history. *Women vs Hollywood* tells a story that establishes women as long-term creators rather than just objects of the cinematic gaze. It explores the contributions of hidden figures of American cinema, such as Tressie Souders (the first black female director of a feature film), Lois Weber (one of the most prolific silent movie filmmakers), and Ida Lupino (one of the most prominent female directors in 1950s Hollywood).

O' Hara provides a detailed history of women's participation in the industry from Alice Guy-Blaché to Ava DuVernay, which leads into a series of thematic critical essays responding to Hollywood's lingering institu- tional misogyny. The stories of these pioneer- ing women directors are well-researched and enthusiastically told here through archives, scholarship, and where possible, interviews with the women whose experiences are at the heart of this book.

The historical chapters tell an infuriating tale that begins with the emergence of an industry where male dominance was not inevitable. Between 1907 and 1920, women were central to early cinema. If you remove their contributions, moving pictures might never have moved beyond the fairground. When filmmaking was an apparent frivolity, women made it theirs. But once filmmaking became accepted as both an art and profes- sion, men were quick to erase the contribu- tions of their female forebearers.

The essays cover subjects including the male-dominated realm of classic film theory, the development of the canon. The prevalence of the 'male gaze' also comes under scrutiny – showing how most films have been made for a viewer assumed to be male. They also cover contemporary issues including #MeToo, equal pay, and the challenges of improving diversity on and off-screen.

Helen O'Hara gives a much-needed perspective and her book could be split into two parts: women's history and feminist fury. *Women vs Hollywood* is a great introduction to the fight women have on their hands if they want to work in the movies. As O'Hara remarks: "the men of Hollywood find it hard to let go of privilege".

But time's up, gentlemen. Women have always been part of the story and now their voices are being heard.