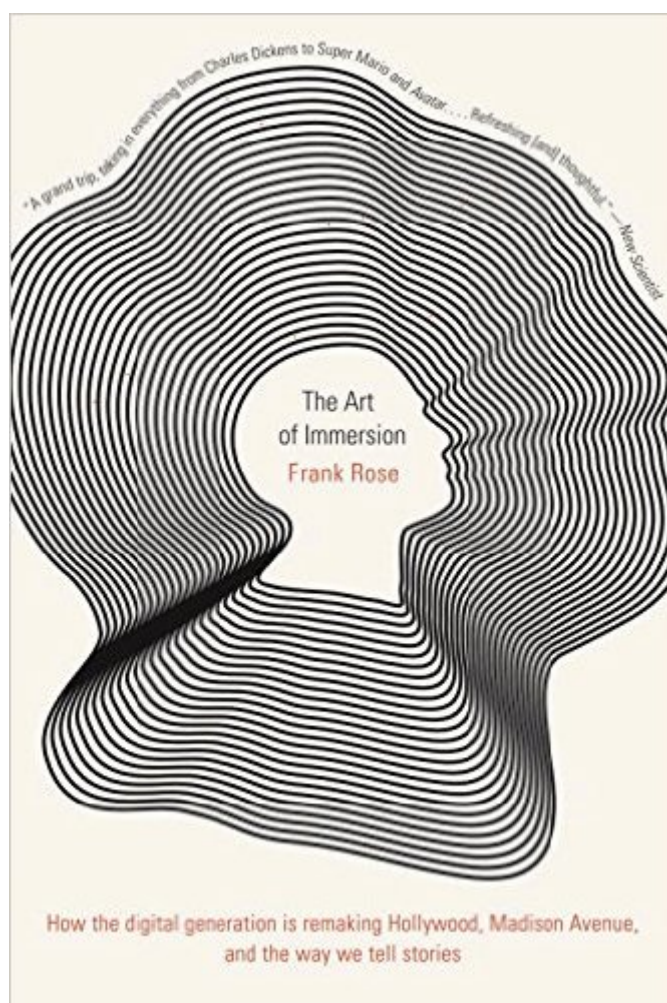# The Art Of Immersion: How The Digital Generation Is Remaking Hollywood, Madison Avenue, And The Way We Tell Stories

Synopsis

"A broad and deep look at how electronic media are changing storytelling . . . . Completely fascinating." â •Booklist, starred review Not long ago we were spectators, passive consumers of mass media. Now, on YouTube and blogs and Facebook and Twitter, we are media. No longer content in our traditional role as couch potatoes, we approach television shows, movies, even advertising as invitations to participateâ •as experiences to immerse ourselves in at will. Frank Rose introduces us to the people who are reshaping media for a two-way world, changing how we play, how we communicate, and how we think.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Rose's new book, The Art of Immersion, provides an interesting behind-the-scenes look into the conception, creation, and promotion of many products of popular media from Christopher Nolan's film The Dark Knight to Xbox's Halo; from George Lucas' Star Wars suite to the Nine Inch Nails' album Year Zero; from ABC's Lost to Evan Williams' sites Blogger and Twitter.Yet for all of its contemporary pop culture references and social media anecdotes, The Art of Immersion feels quite dated. His thesis ("A new type of narrative is emerging--one that's sold through many media at once in a way that's non-linear, that's participatory and often gamelike, and that's designed above all to be immersive.") is obvious to even the most technologically un-savvy reader. Nearly everyone, from Topeka, Kansas to Tokyo, Japan has understood that intuitively (if not explicitly) for 10 years.I enjoyed reading the first few chapters in which Rose discusses the transformation of media and the

creation of increasingly immersive worlds through the advancement of the technology, content and delivery method of newer forms of media. Rose outlines a rough sketch from the invention of the printing press and moveable type to the advent of the motion picture to the seductive glow of the living room television to the immersive and participatory "deep media" of the Internet. Yet as I continued to read, I kept waiting for the book to "start".Each new chapter felt like a slight regurgitation of the one before it; each felt like an introduction to the theme, yet the book never fully developed the theme. True to his subtile, Rose answered How the Digital Generation Is Remaking Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and the Way we Tell Stories. But each chapter begs the questions: WHY?

"The Internet is trying very, very hard to tell us." That quote is from Elan Lee, one of the early pioneers of Alternate Reality Games. Lee created I Love Bees to promote the Xbox game Halo 2, and was part of the 42 Entertainment team (along with Alex Lieu and Susan Bonds) behind Year Zero, which engaged thousands of Nine Inch Nails fans in the creation of a story around the album of the same name.The quote above quote appears in Frank Rose's new book, The Art of Immersion, due out in February 2011. Rose, a long time contributing editor at Wired, where he's covered everything from the fall of the music industry to the impact of digital technology on television, offers an assessment of where story-telling is going in an age when narratives are no longer linear and more often than not are told, or at least informed, by the participation of a consumer community.Rose labels this "deep media." Story-telling that offers an immersive experience. It refers to everything from the online audiences that gathered on their own to decipher the convoluted plot line of Lost, to the MadMen fans who hijacked the show's characters in the form of Twitter personas, playing Don and Betty true to their `60s personas.To his credit, Rose doesn't simply regurgitate examples of current entertainment and gaming industry campaigns like Avatar or Grand Theft Auto. He frames the challenges and emerging formulas in light of all the story telling changes that have come before, from the serialized novels of Dickens, to the early breakthroughs created by D.W. Griffith that gave film its own identity as a medium, to the trans-media narratives about which Henry Jenkins writes so intelligently.Multiple themes emerge in Rose's book.

For me, perhaps the most insightful take-away from reading "The Art of Immersion" is how the various forms of media are being impacted by an apparent loss of control. Chapter four is devoted to this topic. Frank Rose addresses this issue from both sides - challenges and opportunities.The process of immersion can take many forms, but the one that seems to trouble the traditional media

practitioners the most is when "ordinary people" choose to engage with a story and decide to participate in the development of the characters and/or the storyline.These uninvited contributions demonstrate how the Internet, in particular, has enabled many people to rediscover that innate human quality that most of us have not embraced since childhood - the storyteller within.Mr. Rose offers an example of how someone unaffiliated with the production or distribution of the "Mad Men" television series decided to create a Twitter account for Betty Draper (a fictional character) and assumed that persona for the purpose of sharing her innermost thoughts. Apparently, other people have assumed the persona of various characters from the show and tweet about their thoughts as well.How did the AMC cable channel executives react to this amazing act of engagement from the show's audience? They contacted Twitter and requested that all these accounts were shut down. Once the show's fans discovered what had happened, that decision was quickly reversed - with a regretful AMC blessing.Rose summarizes this legacy media disruption phenomenon with the following assessment. "In the command-and-control world, we know who's telling the story; it's the author. But digital media have created an authorship crisis.

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