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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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Tom Cruise, Movie Mogul

A detailed story about Tom Cruise's "firing" from Paramount (his people insist the departure was already in the works when Sumner Redstone fired that broadside) and new deal with the slumbering studio MGM. Yes, Cruise gets to play with the UA logo, and yes, he and Paula Wagner agree the new entity is a "hybrid" between a production deal and a studio. But I still say it's silly to claim Cruise is running a studio. A studio, especially today, makes anywhere from 15-25 major films, as well as owning one or two "indie labels" like Fox Searchlight" that make "smaller" films and probably has a record label for soundtracks and a home DVD division. THAT'S a studio. Cruise and Wagner have a glorified production deal with new ideas of financing and profit participation and ANTICIPATE making 4-6 movies a year. There are independent producers that deliver that many titles to major studios right now and no one claims THEY are running a studio. Still, some of the details are interesting, most notably a drama directed by Robert Redford and starring Redford and Cruise and Meryl Streep. The budget is a tiny \$35 mil for "Lions for Lambs" with the three stars deferring an upfront fee AND deferring a cut of the gross revenue in exchange for splitting (three ways?) half of the film's profit with UA. I'd love to know how they're determining "profit" since that debate is exactly why talent demands big money upfront or a cut of the gross, since there's no debate about what that means. Finally, Wagner is a tad defensive about charges their record is spotty for movies that don't star Cruise. She says anyone's record is "spotty" who makes enough movies. Fair enough, but they have precious few hits to claim. (They've made 12 movies in the past 13 years, by the way, far less than making six movies a year.)

Tom Cruise began work as a producer in 1996. His work as an actor on movies he DIDN'T produce has been impressive:

Jerry Maguire

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