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LETTERS

Feeble excuses on female directors

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I HAD high hopes when I saw the headline for Patrick Goldstein's article ["Wanted: More Female Directors," May 20]. I have been a witness to their plight for some time. But as I made my way down the page and began to really scrutinize the content, my shoulders sagged and the grim nature of the problem began to sink in.

Is it any wonder that conspiracy theories abound when you trumpet the proliferation of female executives in Hollywood yet lament the terrible track record? To hear decision-makers like Stacey Snider and Amy Pascal attempt to justify their roles in this – yes – conspiracy is jaw-dropping and pathetic. And to add insult to injury, venerable producer Polly Platt piles on with the stereotypes: "Men just enjoy being in charge more," and "most women would find [directing a big production] terrifying." Don't tell Hillary Clinton!

The twisted irony in Catherine Hardwicke's final quote pretty much sums up the situation: "All my friends who are directors are guys ... what does that tell you?" It tells me that she is part of the problem and not part of the solution.

Are female executives and working directors so fearful of upsetting the delicate balance of their apple carts that they dare not take a stand in favor of having more women direct? It certainly appears that way, and as a consequence, the status quo will persist and the old boys club will maintain its superiority. And Hollywood will be worse off for it.

Todd Koerner

Hermosa Beach

ONE REASON fewer women may be interested in directing big popcorn movies is because those movies are relentlessly targeted at a male audience. Which points out an even greater sexism in Hollywood than the gender of directors. Hollywood has conveniently forgotten that the last big popcorn movie targeted at a female audience did pretty well. It was called "Titanic."

As for the absurdity that women don't want to be directors because the job is somehow unsuitable for their tender womanly nature, as a female film director I can assure young women everywhere that arriving on a set where 150 people, mostly male, are waiting for you to order them around isn't "terrifying." It's heaven.

Joan Carr-Wiggin

Toronto

DREAMWORKS Co-Chairman Stacey Snider claims, "There just isn't a very wide pool of talent to choose from." Sony Pictures Co-Chairman Amy Pascal concurs: "Look at my summer slate. I don't think there's a woman who would've wanted to direct 'Hancock' or 'Pineapple Express.'" That is, quite simply, bunk.

Legions of talented and accomplished female directors would give their eye teeth to direct a genre, tentpole or blockbuster summer movie. But they are never given the chance. Studios seem to have no qualms hiring a male indie director, often comparatively inexperienced, to helm their tentpole franchises – often to great success.

Christopher Nolan went from directing "Memento" to "Batman Begins." Peter Jackson landed "Lord of the Rings" off "Heavenly Creatures." Yet this opportunity is rarely extended to brilliant female directors, even Academy Award nominees.

We hear the same old lame excuses – "Women won't leave their children," "Women are terrified of taking charge" – excuses that don't seem to apply to powerful female executives such as those quoted above. What a shame that those who have the power to make a change retreat into spin, cowardice and indifference.

Does anyone out there have the guts to open the door to the female directors whom Goldstein so rightly points out are waiting in the wings to show what they can do?

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Jacqui Barcos

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The writers are board members of the Alliance of Women Directors, dedicated to raising the presence of female directors in film and television.

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