



The Cinema Book

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The Cinema Book is widely recognized as the ultimate guide to cinema. Authoritative and comprehensive, the third edition has been extensively revised, updated and expanded in response to developments in cinema and cinema studies. Lavishly illustrated in color, this edition features a wealth of exciting new sections and in-depth case studies.

The Cinema Book Details

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From Reader Review The Cinema Book for online ebook

Paul Bryant says

I watch a lot of movies but I never review any of them. It's strange, there are so many great online reviewers of films, but not of books, or at least, the non-YA books I'm interested in. (With the exception of my dear GR friends of course!) Maybe it's because you can watch a movie in two hours, and not even the speed-readiest person can get through a novel in that time. (Except a graphic novel, damn, there are always exceptions.)

The Cinema Book is a huge thing, you could brain the home invaders in Michael Haneke's *Funny Games* with it, and it's also extremely pretty with pix on every page and a jillion capsule essays about individual movies all the way through. The blurb says this book is "widely regarded as the ultimate guide to cinema". I have been reading it on and off for months now.

What's not to love about this magnificent beast?

Readability, is what.

This is not a guide for the ordinary punter, the movie fan who slurps up *V/H/S/2* followed by *Rome Open City* followed by *Don't Breathe* followed by *The Brood* followed by *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* followed by *Zero Dark Thirty* followed by *The Neon Demon*, to namedrop a few I saw recently. This a guide for those hapless miserable wretched of the earth who are doing FILM STUDIES and know their *mise en scene* from their deep focus and their DW Griffiths from their DW Washburn (an obscure Monkees single – you knew that).

These poor abandoned creatures have to learn a new language, called FILMSPEAK. This book is written in FILMSPEAK. It goes like this.

The concepts of commodities, signs and exchange value suggest a model in which a homology might be established between the circulation of the star image in a circuit of exchange value that produced profit (production, distribution, exhibition) and its circulation in a circuit of semiotic use value (performance, publicity and spectatorship) that produces pleasure. (p111)

A number of studies have appeared that either question any absolute distinction between comedian and narrative, situational or "polite" forms of comedy, or seek to draw attention to the presence of the latter in early films and this to question or modify the ways in which the early history of comedy in the cinema - and the careers of particular comic performers – have been written. P271

In Koch's view, the vamp is a phallic woman rather than a fetishized woman, as she offers contradictory images of femininity that go beyond the reifying gaze.... P495

Studlar argues that visual pleasure in cinema resembles the psychic processes of masochism rather than sadism. Cinema evokes the desire of the spectator to return to the pre-oedipal phase of unity with the mother, and of bisexuality. P495 (Rich pickings on p 495!)

So FILM STUDIES along the way absorbed the concepts and language of many other disciplines – psychology, semiotics, Marxism, sociology, feminism, queer theory, post-structuralism and so on. Do film students have to read up on all that stuff as well as watching every Eisenstein and Jean-Luc Godard movie and understanding vertical market integration? How utterly exhausting. Or do they just watch *The House of*

1000 Corpses and skip through this book and busk it when the exams come along?

Well, I did find some stuff I could use (= I could understand) in here but it was thin on the ground. So, heck, this is a textbook, and I didn't quite realise that when I got it. *The Cinema Book* is so young and attractive, like Tuesday Weld in *Pretty Poison* (Noel Black, 1968) but it'll leave you gasping on a hospital bed with tubes all over before it's done with you. You have been warned.

Evan says

An interesting, far-reaching overview of cinema. It has sections for basic concepts (i.e. narrative, editing, the history of film), national cinemas, genres, and towards the end gets very technical. I'm still not sure I could explain what 'post-structuralism' is to someone else! I found the various case studies particularly interesting.

This is not really a book to read from cover to cover, but rather a reference book. For example, if you want to know more about Scottish cinema, you give the relevant section a read, then check out what reading they recommend.

If you're considering becoming a film student, I'd recommend looking at this first!

Art says

I read the 1985 edition. It is huge but a big chunk of the page count is descriptions of "extracts" that were available from the British Film Institute (I assume this practice ended with the advent of VHS). But I got this for the first 2/3 which discuss film history and film theory. A lot of coverage of auteur theory and its history which flowed into a heavy-going (sometimes impenetrable) section on narrative theory focused on Metz, Levi-Strauss, Barthes, and similar. There are all sorts of thought provoking bits and pieces focused on lighting, editing, genres (especially genres), and specific auteurs. So, it isn't a place to start your thinking about cinema (at least not in 2012 with the 1985 edition) but for those already well-versed, it is at times an enjoyable reminder of viewings past and at other times a very good formula for warding off insomnia.
