

## Cinematic Styles

A perceptive study by Richard Schickel, *D. W. Griffith: An American Life* explores the pioneer director's driving personality and his contribution to film art. Griffith's inability to cope with the film industry's changing patterns is attributed by Schickel to business naivete, secretiveness and Victorian sentimentality (*Simon & Schuster \$24.95*).

In *Films Before Griffith*, a stimulating anthology edited by John L. Fell, the movie industry's structure from 1898 to 1908 and the narrative forms of that decade's films are examined in the light of a new approach to the study of film history (*U. of California Press \$24.50/10.95*).

Phil Hardy's extensive and detailed study, *The Western*, includes 1800 films, listing production credits, plot summaries and critical comments, with numerous illustrations. The book's chronological arrangement clarifies vividly the genre's historic development and artistic recognition (*Morrow \$25*).

A well-documented and entertaining survey by Derek Elley, *The Epic Film* explores the themes and style of such movies as *Ben Hur*, *Intolerance*, *The Ten Commandments* and *Conan the Barbarian* as prime examples of historic events viewed as pretexts for spectacle (*Routledge & Keegan Paul \$25*).

In *Tales of the Hollywood Raj*, Sheridan Morley assesses the 50-year domination of the Hollywood acting scene by such British performers as Ronald Colman, Cary Grant, David Niven, Joan Collins and Dudley Moore, and the continental flavor they gave to an essentially American art form (*Viking \$17.95*).

## The Reference Shelf

A major reference work of unequaled scope, *Variety Film Reviews 1907-1980* is a massive 15-vol. set reproducing in facsimile some 40,000 reviews published in the authoritative weekly of the entertainment world. American and foreign movie critiques, with cast-&-credits, plot summaries and critical appraisals, appear in this prime source of knowledge about the evolution of cinema as art and industry. It is available to film buffs and serious students in most public and academic libraries, as well as in bookstores (*Garland, \$150 ea., \$1750/set*).

A new edition of *Professional Cameraman's Handbook* by Verne and Sylvia Carlson updates this standard guide widely used by both Directors of Photography and their assistants. Covering all current cameras and equipment, it describes in extensive detail 33 models of nine major 35/16mm cameras and related accessories, as well as film identification, assembling threading and troubleshooting procedures (*Focal Press \$24.95*).

Michael Singer's *Film Directors* (2nd edition) is a comprehensive, international listing of 1200 currently active directors and their 12,000 films. This serviceable, cross-indexed directory also provides vital statistics, some home addresses, agents and business managers (*Lone Eagle, Beverly Hills, CA; \$32.95*).

Three scholarly, well-researched volumes in UMI's *Studies in Cinema* series examine film in its sociological, historic and esthetic aspects. In *The Samurai Films of Akira Kurosawa*,

David Desser appraises the influence of Hollywood Westerns on the Japanese director's work. In *Visions, Images and Dreams*, Eric A. Goldman studies the evolution of Yiddish cinema in the USA, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In *Women's Reflections: The Feminist Film Movement*, Jan Rosenberg explores basic media attitudes on feminist activities (*UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, MI; \$39.95 ea.*).

Hollywood's traditional screen image of women is perceptively contrasted, in E. Ann Kaplan's *Women and Film*, with their present-day presentation by women directors. From Cukor's *Camille* to Marguerite Duras' *Nathalie Granger*, the changes in film style and content traceable to assertive feminism are intelligently discussed (*Methuen \$10.95*).

Thematic links between John Steinbeck's novels and the films based on them are probed by Joseph R. Millichap in *Steinbeck and Film*, clarifying a relationship that influenced the novelist's literary style (*Ungar \$6.95*).

Movie reviews originally published in Larry Flynt's magazine are reprinted in *The Hustler's Guide to X-Rated Films*. Over 100 current theatrical features, now available on videocassettes, are included in this descriptive, profusely illustrated catalog, providing full credits, critical assessments and a rating system (*Hustler Magazine, Los Angeles, \$3.95*).

## The Media World

Now in paperback, Raymond Fielding's *A Technological History of Motion Picture and Television* reprints significant articles from the SMPTE Journal. They follow the development of both media as recorded in the reminiscences of pioneers and in reports about early film/TV technology, cinematography, film stock, and sound (*U. of California Press \$10.95*).

A handy and efficient text, Gerald Millerson's *Video Camera Techniques* provides reliable information on characteristics and uses. Whether in studio or location situations, the video-camera's potential is discussed here with competence and explicitness (*Focal Press \$13.95*).

The latest revised edition of Herbert Zettl's basic text, *Television Production Handbook*, translates into practical terms the medium's latest technical advances by focusing on their interconnections with existing procedures and equipment. This 4th edition also considers the esthetic elements involved in production, such as visual effects, graphics and design, and directorial styles (*Wadsworth, Belmont, CA; \$27.95*).

In *Writing for Television and Radio*, Robert L. Hilliard offers a career-oriented textbook that covers comprehensively the skills required for successful professional scripting. Whether dealing with commercials or documentaries, news or sports, talk shows, educational programs or drama, Hilliard adopts a bread-and-butter approach to the writer's craft, providing practical exercises and specific examples of scripts and copy actually used on the air (*Wadsworth, Belmont, CA; \$19.95*).

George L. George ●

## TURN OUT THE STARS BEFORE LEAVING

by John C. Lindsay  
Boston Mills Press (Erin, Ontario)  
1984, pp. 176.  
ISBN 0-919822-53-5, \$35.00

Architectural historians have tended to neglect motion-picture theatres, in spite of their contribution to the cultural and social life of this century. Perhaps this is because these buildings were long considered as little more than monumental examples of the worst of late Victorian and Edwardian decorative overkill, filtered through the dubious tastes of Hollywood. Today, with the strict functionalism of modern architecture less in favor than it once was, many once-despised turn of the century buildings are being re-evaluated. *Turn Out The Stars Before Leaving* shows what enormous color and variety existed in the great large cinema buildings, many of which, unfortunately, can no longer be seen.

Theatre historian John Lindsay has spent seven years researching this small but lavishly illustrated volume. From the rambling introduction which Mary Pickford wrote shortly before her death, the book takes its frankly anecdotal tone. The structure, with chapters on the types of theatre, the theatre chains, the phenomenon of the cinema organ, and the fate of the buildings, derives from Ben Hall's groundbreaking *The Best Remaining Seats*. While Lindsay's prose is sometimes lumpy and disjointed, the photographs and captions which make up much of the book never fail to intrigue and inform.

As Pickford noted in her introduction, the great movie theatres aimed to impress. While Canada's small population precluded such huge theatres as the Roxy in New York, the Fox in Detroit, or the Chicago in Chicago, Lindsay clearly shows that Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Halifax, Winnipeg, Vancouver and even small centres like Brantford, could rightly claim to have great movie houses in the 1920's.

There were two types of theatre design. The "atmospheric" theatres were

grand illusions indeed with their painted ceilings resembling open sky and fantastic decoration ranging from the Moorish of the aptly named Grenada in Sherbrooke, Quebec, to the medieval hall of the Capitol in Halifax. Perhaps the highest achievement of this type and certainly the visual highlight of the book, was Loews Winter Garden in Toronto, with its proscenium shaped like trees, handpainted foliage hanging from the ceiling, and main curtain depicting a woodland glade. The color photographs show an amazing state of preservation, in spite of the theatre's having been closed for over fifty years.

No less impressive were the hardtop theatres, many designed by Thomas Lamb, which were intended to overwhelm with their opulence. As the photographs of the Palace and Loews in Montreal, the Capitol in Ottawa, the Imperial in Toronto and the Orpheum in Vancouver show, nothing was spared in scale and decoration of the auditorium, the lobby or the lounges.

The arrival of the Depression ended the construction of the great movie palaces, although there was a revival of sorts after the war, when such theatres as the Odeon Carlton and University in Toronto were built. Lindsay, who has been active in the attempts to halt the demolition of the latter house, laments the decline in showmanship and presentation the minuscule theatres in the shopping malls represent. Though Canada escaped the decline of its urban centres that saw the large American theatres sink into disrepair and disrepute, houses fell, victim to the wrecker, among them the Capitol in Montreal, the Capitol in Ottawa, and the Odeon Carlton less than thirty years after it opened. Many of the others have been subdivided, including the Loews and Palace in Montreal and the Imperial in Toronto, once the largest in the country. However, John Lindsay ends on optimistic note, citing the survival of the Orpheum in Vancouver and the Capitol in Quebec City, and the restoration of the Imperial in Montreal, as evidence that the great movie theatres may yet survive.

Paul Costabile ●

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