

Film Noir: A Comprehensive, Illustrated Reference to Movies, Terms, and Persons

Michael L. Stephens

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before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Film Noir: A Comprehensive, Illustrated Reference to Movies, Terms, and Persons:

20 of 22 people found the following review helpful. Value and ambitions severely compromised by multiple errorsBy A CustomerThis costly reference book, which aims at exhaustiveness, is severely compromised by errors and omissions. Quite obviously a labor of love, it desperately needed the services of a fact-checker or ruthless proofreader. As published, it fails to achieve the authoritativeness it craves. For example: TWICE Audrey Totter in The Lady in The Lake is misidentified as Claire Trevor -- this in picture captions! Neither Joan Crawford's nomination for nor winning of the 1945 Oscar for best actress as Mildred Pierce is mentioned in the entry on Academy Awards for films noirs. An entry on Lloyd Noland includes a critique of a role in Brute Force, in which he did not appear; the part was played by Hume Cronyn. Geoffrey Homes is given as the pseudonym not of screenwriter Daniel Mainwaring but of cinematographer Nicholas Musuraca. And so on. In general, the author works from a limited noir filmography, omitting many relevant works (Desert Fury, to name only one). Steven's value judgements are often of interest, though his critical vocabulary seems limited (performances are often described merely as "good" or "very good."). The work retains value as a compendium of information about the film noir cycle in encyclopedic form, and is strong on

neglected members of the team such as art directors and composers. Unfortunately, it's far from complete and very far from trustworthy. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. still faulty ...By RK, Germany apart from the fact that even the revised edition still contains minor but embarrassing errors (e.g. Thieves' Highway credited to Nicholas Ray in one place), i was even more astonished to find exact phrases from other sources in this book, e.g. descriptions of features of actors Edmund O'Brien and Charles McGraw taken from Bruce Crowther's book on film noir. Stephen's book needs intense reworking though, to be honest, i doubt that i will ever see one.

Film Noir is a uniquely American genre that has stylistic links to the German expressionist cinema of the 1920s and thematic links to the hard-boiled crime fiction that emerged in the 1930s. Generally the milieu is urban and middle class, and the overall feel is one of repression and fatalism. Whether shot in black and white or color, the style reinforces the overall feel. Films, directors, actors, producers, screenwriters, art directors, themes, plot devices and many other elements are contained in this encyclopedic reference work. Each movie entry includes full filmographic data (studio, running time, production and cast credits, and plot synopsis) along with an analysis of its place in the genre. Biographical entries focus on the persons role in noir and provide a complete filmography of their film noir work. Terms are placed in the context of the genre and relevant examples from films are given.

From Library Journal The author begins this book with an excellent introduction to film noir, that enduringly popular genre of films with fatalistic, bleak themes. Although they became most famous during the 1940s and 1950s-when such exemplars as *Double Indemnity* and *The Big Heat* were released-Stephens traces their genesis to the Thirties. The encyclopedic entries include film titles, actors, screenwriters, directors, studios, cinematographers, composers, themes (e.g., amnesia), and more. The film entries are especially good, with complete credits supplemented by lengthy plot descriptions and personal notes addressing casting or why the film was successful. In *Film Noir*, films that may be too obscure for other film encyclopedias have a great book dedicated to their genre. Highly recommended for public libraries and any library with a film collection. Judy Hauser, Oakland Sch. Lib. Svcs., Waterford, Mich. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. "provides a much-needed service to classic noir scholars" -- Analytical Enumerative Bibliography About the Author Film historian Michael L. Stephens lives in Fort Worth, Texas. He is also the author of *Art Directors in Cinema* (1998) and *Gangster Films* (1996).