

AMERICAN SILENT FILM BY WILLIAM K. EVERSON



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From Library Journal

LJ's reviewer predicted this book was "bound to become the standard work on the period" (LJ 6/1/78), especially since it offers an in-depth look at "flickers" made prior to the 1920s boom that have been neglected in other histories. In addition to the early features, chapters cover D.W. Griffith and *The Birth of a Nation*, the Western, comedy, art direction and production design, the European influence, genres, directors, and the transition to sound. This survey remains "a readable, informed history of the period."

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About the Author

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Praised as the "best modern survey of the silent period" (New Republic), this indispensable history tells you everything you need to know about American silent film, from the nickelodeons in the early 1900s to the birth of the first "talkies" in the late 1920s. The author provides vivid descriptions of classic pictures such as *The Birth of a Nation*, *Intolerance*, *Sunrise*, *The Covered Wagon*, and *Greed*, and lucidly discusses their technical and artistic merits and weaknesses. He pays tribute to acknowledged masters like D. W. Griffith, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and Lillian and Dorothy Gish, but he also gives ample attention to previously neglected yet equally gifted actors and directors. In addition, the book covers individual genres, such as the comedy, western gangster, and spectacle, and explores such essential but little-understood subjects as art direction, production design, lighting and camera techniques, and the art of the subtitle. Intended for all scholars, students, and lovers of film, this fascinating book, which features over 150 film stills, provides a rich and comprehensive overview of this unforgettable era in film history.

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Most helpful customer reviews

36 of 36 people found the following review helpful.

Twenty-year old book is still one of the best on silent film

By Bruce Calvert

This book, written by the late film expert William K. Everson, is one of the best that you will read on silent film. Everson covers the entire silent film era from its beginnings to the coming of sound. This book focuses on the artistic successes more than the business end of the topic. While he completely covers D.W. Griffith's career, he also champions other early directors like John Collins. He covers interesting topics like art direction (or the lack of) in many early films. While the scope of the book is American films, he devotes time to the influence of European films and filmmakers on American films.

This book is an excellent introduction to silent film, yet a person familiar with the topic will not be able to put it down either.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Great book that is now showing its age a bit

By Popeye Arms

Great book that is now showing its age a bit. Still, it is the one by which others must be judged.

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Very nice BASIS for your Film Library

By Angie2

If you are truly serious about the Silent Film Era, then this book is a must for your Library.

The author (who has since died) is very thorough in his research, from start to finish. The B&W photos are also fun to look at.

You might, though, find some of the chapters a bit "dry"...but then, most comprehensive history books (on any big topic, as this one) can seem as such.

Note that this film history book was written in the 1970's, so possibly a few more films may have been discovered or have been restored by now. Still, this 1970 film history book holds up very well, even in 2007.

The actual silent film "facts" presented by the author have not changed all that much since the 1970's, since the silent film experiences from the 1900's to the 1920's have basically remained the same. In fact, the author lists a thorough time-line in the appendix of this book, listing most American silent films that have been found and restored in the last century! Quite a feat in itself, and so interesting!

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