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Film Noir: Reflections in a Dark Mirror

Bruce Crowther

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Bruce Crowther : Film Noir: Reflections in a Dark Mirror before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Film Noir: Reflections in a Dark Mirror:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy ArthurI am very happy with this product3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Good introduction to the genreBy CustomerIf you are interested in film noirs, many books contains nothing more than film reviews -- or, in the more fortunate cases, like 27 Movies from the Dark Side: Ebert's Essentials, critics. It is hardly enough -- if you want to understand the essence of film noirs, you need context. The film industry, the actors, the literary background were all important factors in the forming of this cinematic "tradition" (it was never a real movement, more like a phenomenon). This book provides some of this context; it is certainly an excellent starting point for further research.It is a well-structured and well-written book, with lots of pictures, and very thorough index and an extensive reference section. The author has genuine love for this genre, which also helps.My only slight problem (it is not an essential point) that the author's tone is extremely subjective. His statements on what is a "true" noir, what a "real" femme fatale is like, which movie is "good", which is "bad", are more like reflections on his own subjective opinion, which can contradict heavily the reader's own experience.I still love this book, however. As someone who only started to know this genre and needed some solid points, I truly appreciate the author's efforts and I use it day by day ever since I read it.

With the advent of the Second World War a new mood was discernible in film drama an atmosphere of disillusion and a sense of foreboding, a dark quality that derived as much from the characters depicted as from the cinematographers

art. These films, among them such classics as *Double Indemnity*, *The Woman in the Window*, *Touch of Evil* and *Sunset Boulevard*, emerged retrospectively as a genre in themselves when a film critic referred to them collectively as film noir. Bruce Crowther looks into noir's literary origins (often in the novels of so-called hard-boiled school typified by Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett and Cornell Woolrich), and at how the material translated into the screen, noting in particular influences from German expressionist films and the almost indispensable techniques of flashback and voice-over narration. He also assesses the contribution made by the players by actors such as Robert Mitchum, Dick Powell, Alan Ladd and John Garfield and actresses such as Barbara Stanwyck, Lizabeth Scott, Joan Crawford and Gloria Grahame, together with a roll-call of supporting players whose screen presence could lend almost any film the noir imprimatur. Noir was in its heyday from 1945 to 1955, a time when paranoia and disillusion, anxiety and violence could be said to have been part of the fabric of American, and particularly Hollywood, society, yet its impact and its influence are with us still in films as diverse as *The French Connection*, *Chinatown* and *Body Heat*. This book commemorates a special period in film-making and a unique combination of talent resulting in a spectrum of films that are as welcome today on their small screen as they were when they were first shown in the cinema.