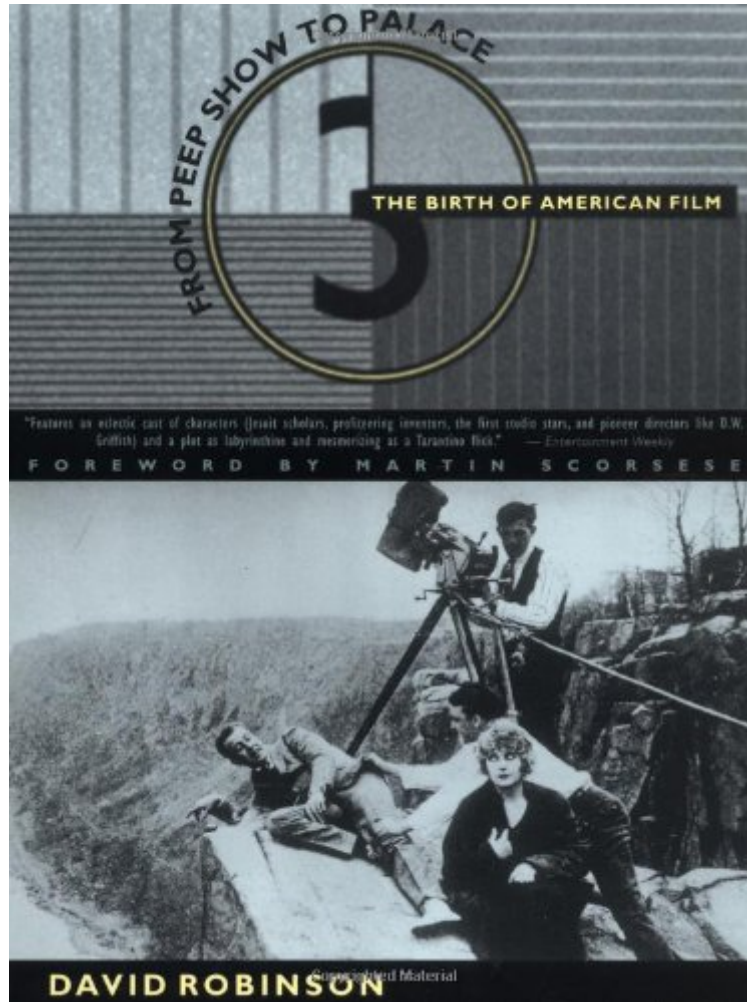


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Film critic David Robinson chronicles the early use of film as vaudeville sideshow; as sheer spectacle of moving images precluding any notion of plot development or drama; and as a fledgling dramatic effort, ranging from prizefights to Passion plays. He also takes readers to the nickelodeon theaters, and replete with more than 150 drawings and photographs, shows how the earliest devices of cinematic prehistory--machines with colorful names like the Phantascope and the Wheel of Life--led to the technology of filmmaking we know today.

A diligent overview from the moment cinema was just a flicker in a magic lantern to the golden years between 1893 and 1913, when scientists and technicians laboriously fitted together the 'pieces in a puzzle' and created feature films. (New York Times Book)This concise history takes us from footage of an Edison employee sneezing to multireel features with a sophistication appropriate to the lavish theaters in which they were shown (New Yorker)About the AuthorDavid Robinson is a film historian and critic.