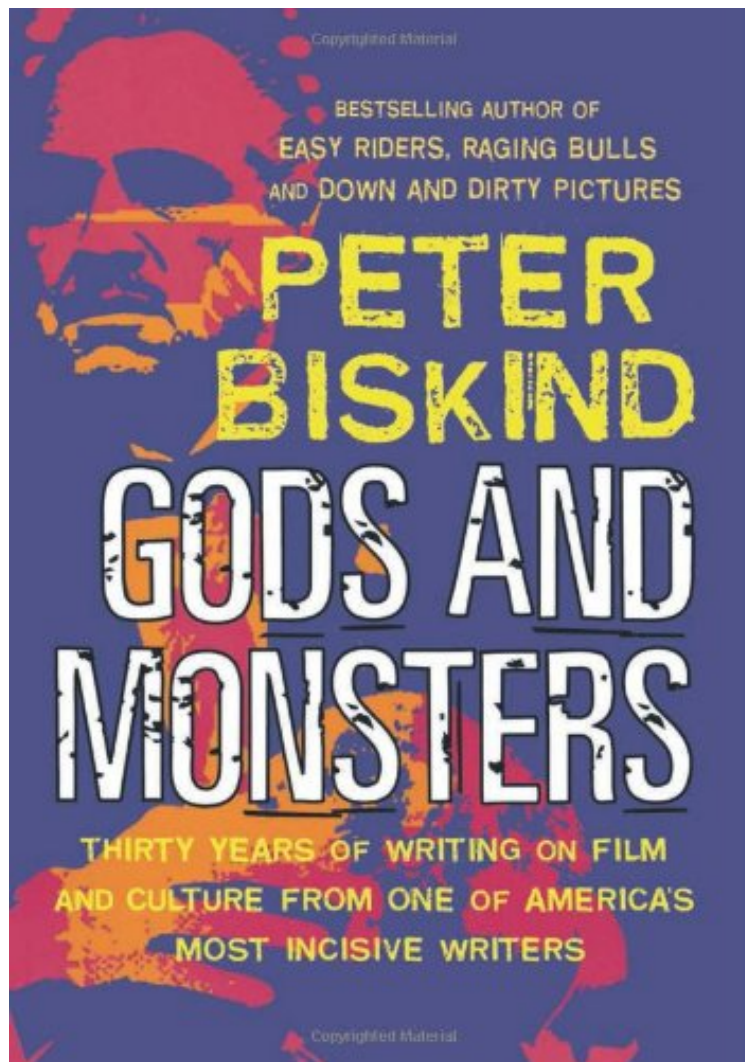


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## Gods and Monsters: Thirty Years of Writing on Film and Culture from One of America's Most Incisive Writers (Nation Books)

*Peter Biskind*

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**Peter Biskind : Gods and Monsters: Thirty Years of Writing on Film and Culture from One of America's Most Incisive Writers (Nation Books)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Gods and Monsters: Thirty Years of Writing on Film and Culture from One of America's Most Incisive Writers (Nation Books):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Not like 'Raging Bulls and Easy Riders' at allBy For Truth In AdvertisingI was hoping this would be in the same vein as Biskind's other book, however, it's mostly about his

personal perspective on movies - how they affected the times they came out in, or reflecting the times they came out in. A little bit of this goes a long way - and it gets to be kind of a drag - to me at least - compared to his other book. Also, some of what he says is debatable, even though he couches it in absolutes. After all - this is his interpretation - not mine, nor that of many others. I was hoping for many more interviews with actors, directors, producers, and film personnel - material like that is kinda' thin in this book. Not very much of it. If you're seeking something like "Raging Bulls and Easy Riders" --- back away, this isn't it. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. It's okay to step out of the cupboard on this one. They aren't scary. By Mitchell J. Hall This book is okay and this is going by the immense standards that this writer has set. Raging bulls and Down and Dirty pictures are some of the most entertaining books I've ever read. Great reads. Yet this one is a little patchy and can easily be passed over. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. disappointed By Tina RI was really disappointed with this book. The writing was awful, very disjointed, and egocentric, not really interesting. I had thought it would be great....a subject I am interested in, etc. But I couldn't finish it..

Peter Biskind authored two of the most talked about and read books of the last decade: Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex-Drugs-and-Rock-'n'-Roll Generation Saved Hollywood and its bestselling sequel Down and Dirty Pictures: Miramax, Sundance, and the Rise of Independent Film. Gods and Monsters chronicles the cause and courses of Hollywood over the last three decades: the super freaks, lowlifes, charlatans and occasional geniuses who have left their bite mark on American culture, as refracted through the trajectory of Peter Biskind's career. The ghosts of McCarthyism and the blacklist haunt Gods and Monsters as do the casualties of the counterculture and the New Hollywood: the story of Sue Mengers, the '70s "super-agent" whose career went mysteriously south, is extraordinarily poignant, as is the example of Terence Malick, whose light shone so brightly in the same period but then disappeared until 1997's *The Thin Red Line*. But at the heart of the book are the likes of Warren Beatty, Oliver Stone, Martin Scorsese, Robert Redford and Quentin Tarantino and uber-producers Don Simpson and Harvey Weinstein and their excess lifestyles, all of whom Biskind portrays in great Dickensian detail, charting how they have had a simultaneously strangulating and liberating effect on the industry.

From Publishers Weekly Best known for his popular book on 1970s cinema, *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*, Biskind has strung together a compendium of his magazine articles, dating from his tenure as editor-in-chief at *American Film* up to his current post as a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair*. While Biskind at his best provides uniquely bracing film critique, far too much of this volume is of little merit to today's readers. The strongest pieces are Biskind's profiles of master agent Sue Mengers, "a female Billy Wilder," and Charlie Feldman, an unknown figure today who in his time combined his talents to be both a legendary Hollywood producer and agent. It's hard to reconcile these humane, illuminating profiles with Biskind's review of an old Clint Eastwood film, *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot*, which appears to be obsessed with the film's latent homosexuality. There's also a dated analysis of George Lucas's Star Wars films that not only does not consider the latest additions to the series but includes such overblown analysis as "The Jabba episode culminates in an explicit vagina dentata fantasy as Luke and his pals have to walk a phallic gangplank." Because Biskind is, as billed, an incisive writer, readers will wish he bothered to update such statements as, "Vietnam was the first television war, and it may be the last." Here's hoping next time around, Biskind will give his loyal readers something new to chew on. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Of late the author of books on the movie industry, Biskind began his career in the 1960s, writing about the intersection of politics and cinema for small leftist journals. Hollywood's move away from substance in the 1980s and, presumably, the need to make a living led him to profiling celebrities for glossies like *Vanity Fair* and *premiere*. His early work is represented in this collection by thoughtful essays on topics including anticommunism in director Elia Kazan's work, the espousal of anti-individualism in '50s sf movies, and the portrayal of blue-collar America in '70s films. Later entries, sketching such powerful Hollywood figures as directors Clint Eastwood and Martin Scorsese, producer Don Simpson, and agents Charlie Feldman and Sue Mengers, are less distinctive but highly engaging. If these pieces collectively lack the impact of *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls* (1998) and *Down and Dirty Pictures* (2004), which many consider definitive on '70s New American Cinema and '90s indie powerhouse Miramax, respectively, they constitute a less straightforward depiction of the now three-decades-long decline of American cinema. Gordon Flagg Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved