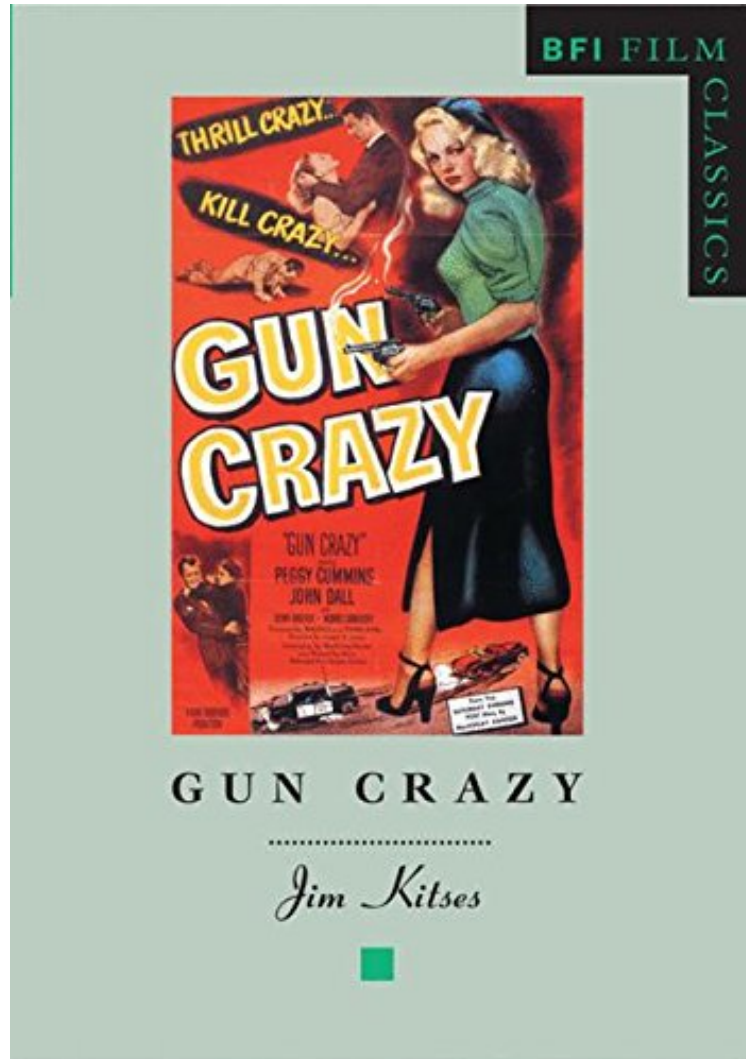


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## Gun Crazy (BFI Film Classics)

*Jim Kitses*

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**Jim Kitses : Gun Crazy (BFI Film Classics)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Gun Crazy (BFI Film Classics):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great booklet on Gun Crazy movie's place in the development ...By Bonna RossGreat booklet on Gun Crazy movie's place in the development of film noir and its influence on films like Bonnie and Clyde. Great read for any film buff.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Jim Kitses and GUN CRAZY Are a Perfect MatchBy Terri Fawn HowardWithin the first few pages of BFI's GUN CRAZY we have Jim Kitses making stylistic analogies between this intriguing film and CITIZEN KANE--and the provocative comments keep coming. Originally bogged down in the title DEADLY IS THE FEMALE, GUN CRAZY has gain much-deserved status with the passage of time. Kitses credits French writers with the first in-depth study of this cult classic,

a film largely forgotten and ignored by Americans until the release of *BONNIE AND CLYDE*. He gives excellent information about the film noir genre, discussing its inherent symbolism and iconography (rain, deserted street, stranger and policeman), and even demonstrates how Gene Kelly turned all of this on its head during the uber-famous *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN* number. Specifically, he views the protagonists of *GUN CRAZY* as figures reminiscent of the Old West, their hyper-developed sense of individualism at odds with the hum-drum status quo--which, naturally, makes them noir, too. Particularly worthwhile is Kitses' handling of Bart Tare's fanatical relationship with guns, a topic the film never quite explains. Of course, censorship problems are addressed, with excerpts from various letters from the dubious Breen Office. The romantic coupling of Tare and Laurie Starr, a genuine love match, is dealt with at length and with sensitivity--they're not your usual noir couple. The book concludes with Kitses' recap of his meeting with Peggy Cummings, who played Laurie Starr. It's a charming anecdote to top off an excellent study of the wonderful film called *GUN CRAZY*.<sup>3</sup> of 3 people found the following review helpful. A great little companion to the B-movie classic

By Joseph P. Menta, Jr. When I popped "Gun Crazy" into my DVD player a while back, I was just hoping for an entertaining "B-movie" experience... you know, guns, crooks on the lam, a tempess who tries to be good but just can't, all that kind of stuff. So I was quite surprised that, in addition to getting all those things, I also got an extremely well crafted, excellently directed film with great performances and complex things to say about guns, the American dream, child psychology, and gender roles. It was a great film. So, I wasn't surprised to later see that the British Film Institute produced one of its thin BFI Classics volumes about "Gun Crazy". Written by film scholar Jim Kitsis, this is a great examination of the movie and very entertaining to read. I particularly liked the 5-page or so postscript, which describes the author's visit to the home of Peggy Cummins, the female lead in the film, in 1995. Ms. Cummins shares lots of great stories about the film with the author, as well as her reactions to the author's opinions about the film. A highly recommended little book for those who enjoyed "Gun Crazy".

Joseph H. Lewis's "Gun Crazy" is the story of two young lovers who embark on a crime spree. For this book, Kitses researched widely into the film production's history and explored its connection to the crime film tradition and to the dark underside of American society.

From the Back Cover *Gun Crazy* is the very essence of film noir, a low-budget, high-octane thriller whose reputation has grown with every passing year since its first appearance in 1950. While its story of two doomed lovers, crashing through the small towns of the mid-West, running the gauntlet of hold-ups and shoot-outs to a bloody nemesis, owes much to the true-life tale of Bonnie and Clyde, the film achieves an intense poetry eloquently expressive of the dark side of the American Dream. The film's origins in the skid-row operation of the King Brothers are expertly described by Jim Kitses. He traces "Gun Crazy"'s roots in the rain-slicked, night-time world of noir, and in the postwar American society that gave birth to it. He teases out the effects of the Production Code, and the distinctive contributions of director Joseph H. Lewis, writers MacKinlay Kantor and the blacklisted Dalton Trumbo, and stars, Peggy Cummins and John Dall. Above all, Kitses provides a wonderfully alert and informative reading of a small masterpiece, a film that rises triumphantly above the modesty of its means.

About the Author Jim Kitses is the author of *Horizons West*, a classic study of the Western. He is Professor of Cinema Studies at San Francisco State University.