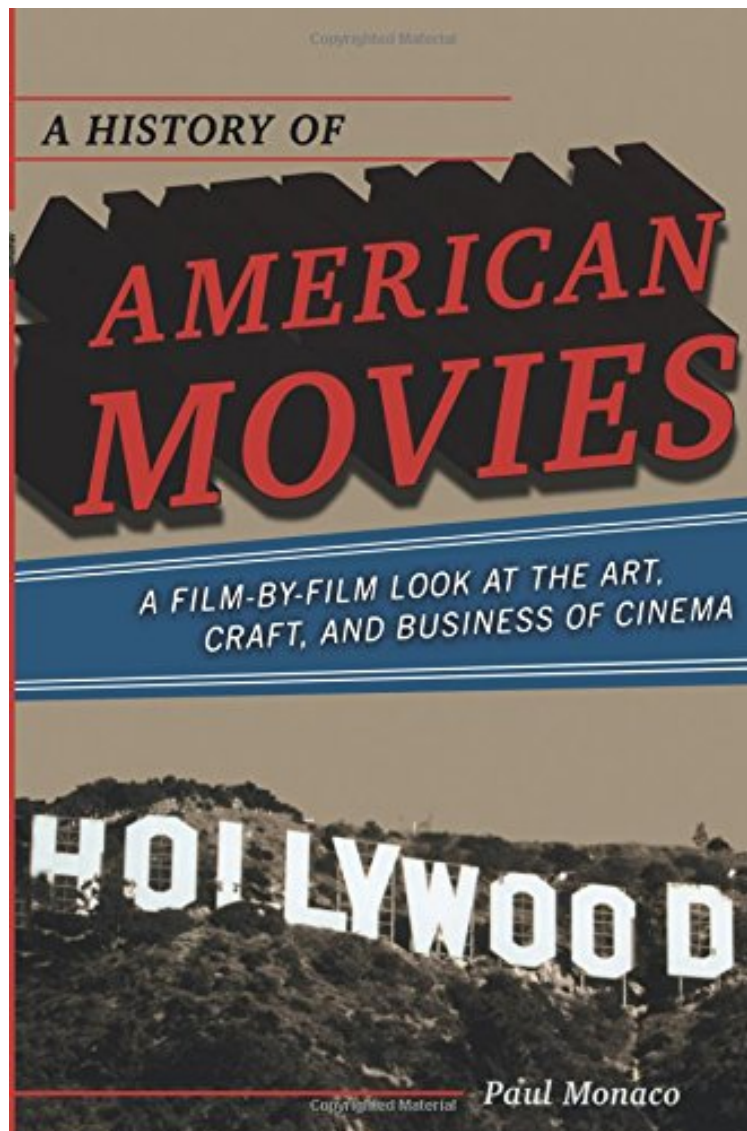


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## A History of American Movies: A Film-by-Film Look at the Art, Craft, and Business of Cinema

*Paul Monaco*

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**Paul Monaco : A History of American Movies: A Film-by-Film Look at the Art, Craft, and Business of Cinema** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A History of American Movies: A Film-by-Film Look at the Art, Craft, and Business of Cinema:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Key book for history of American movies By J. Rhineland I would

recommend this book to both adults teenagers interested in film. I purchased this for a precocious teenager who writes reviews himself so that he would have a sense of the history of American movies. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars By Mark3\_5dguy Not bad- a little dry. Needed it as a textbook. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. *Chronicling Award Winners with Reviews and Plot* By Eric B. Those of us who grew up with physical reference books will find "A History of American Movies" warm and familiar. It's a page-turner of encyclopedia-esque recaps of each Academy Award winner for Best Picture, along with those films which were included on the AFI's list of America's 100 best films. I found everything leading up to the 1970's to be intriguing and informative in most spots. Making the list chronological is, in general, logical for the reader, and helps paint the picture of industry changes. The text straddles the line between academic writing and everyday prose. Monaco looks to find themes in the pictures and ties them together via chapters. Though he varies the formula for each entry slightly, most films are only treated with two to three pages of narrative, covering four main areas: important details about the people/studios involved in the movie; a quick synopsis of the plot; critical reaction to the film; and, any lasting impact on the industry or popular culture. While I enjoyed the piece, I find some major points of criticism. The choice of highlighting Oscar winners and AFI selections provides a fairly narrow canvas for discussion-- especially since the title of the book is "A History of American Movies." It really is only a book about award-winning films. Those of us who are under 40 will feel the loss of very important films/genres which did not make the cut for sections after 1980. Comedy, horror, action, animation, romance are practically absent from the last quarter of the book, despite the fact each of those genres produced very influential works. Another point of contention for me is how the author uses his researched film criticism. In the early chapters, it feels fresh to read how culture critics of the day lauded or lambasted works that are considered classics now. (The section on "The Wizard of Oz" is hilarious.) But as the book continues, it feels that Monaco does not effectively use criticisms to reach any broad consensus about a movie-- and the results just boil down to "some people liked it, some people hated it." Portions where criticisms are used to demonstrate a "culture war"-type divide feel unsupported. There are multiple points where the author goes on right-leaning political targets which are not supported enough to feel relevant. He heavily implies that government intervention in the studio monopolies on production, distribution, and exhibition of films was detrimental to the quality of later filmmaking, without exploring the benefits to a more open system. He spends a good deal of the book pushing back on widely-held beliefs about the negative effects of the blacklisting of possible communist sympathizers in Hollywood. Also, he doesn't directly deal with the restrictions of free speech by the restrictive Hollywood production code. Conservatism is rarely addressed, but "liberalism" and "elites" are frequently brought up as boogey men. I think this book works as a general reference guide: a good starting point to learn more about award-winning American cinema. Further fleshing out of what each film represented about American at the time, and less superfluous detail, would make it a more essential work.

In *A History of American Movies: A Film-by-Film Look at the Art, Craft and Business of Cinema*, Paul Monaco provides a survey of the narrative feature film from the 1920s to the present. The book focuses on 170 of the most highly regarded and recognized feature films selected by the Hollywood establishment: each Oscar winner for Best Picture, as well as those voted the greatest by members of the American Film Institute. By focusing on a select group of films that represent the epitome of these collaborations, Monaco provides an essential history of one of the modern world's most complex and successful cultural institutions: Hollywood. Divided into three sections, "Classic Hollywood, 1927-1948," "Hollywood In Transition, 1949-1974," and "The New Hollywood, 1975 To The Present," Monaco examines some of the most memorable works in cinematic history, including *The General*, *Wings*, *Bringing Up Baby*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Citizen Kane*, *Casablanca*, *On the Waterfront*, *The Searchers*, *Psycho*, *West Side Story*, *The Godfather*, *Cabaret*, *Raging Bull*, *Rain Man*, *Toy Story*, and *Saving Private Ryan*. This is the only book that thoroughly treats Hollywood and the most significant movies that it has made simultaneously as the coming together of an art, a craft, and a business. This approach provides unique insight into the workings of one of the most accomplished and successful art forms in human history: the Hollywood feature film.

Considering the films that won the Academy Award for Best Picture from 1927 to 2008 and the American Film Institute's 'Greatest American Films' listed in 1996 and 2006, Monaco (cinema/video, Montana State Univ.; Understanding Society, Culture, and Television) has injudiciously divided American cinema into three eras: 'Classic Hollywood (1927-48)', 'Hollywood in Transition (1949-74)', and 'New Hollywood' (1975 to the present). There are also sections about the founding of the studio system, a handful of classic silent films, and the coming of sound. For each era, Monaco attempts to encapsulate the genres, leading directors, dominant studios, and the best films. As he discusses the films, he proffers brief plot summaries, production background, and information about those involved in making the films, budgets, critical reviews, and public receptions. (Library Journal) Paul Monaco has created an intriguing look at the history of the American movie industry and the movies it created. a comprehensive look at the fascinating development of American filmmaking from a nascent technology to a multi-billion dollar industry and culture-maker. Schools with active film studies departments or strong interest in film from other departments will find

this work especially relevant for their circulating collection, if not for their reference collections. (American Reference Books Annual, May-August 2010) *A History of American Movies: A Film-by-Film Look at the Art, Craft, and Business of Cinema* explains how the collaboration among screen-writers, directors, producers, actors, cinematographers designers, sound recorders, and mixers, editors, and production management teams "works." The complexity of movies as art, craft, and business is explained using Best Picture Oscar winners and American Film Institute "greatest" narrative feature films from the 1920s to the present. (Communication Booknotes Quarterly 2011-07-01) About the Author Paul Monaco is professor of Cinema/Video at Montana State University. He is the author of *Understanding Society, Culture, and Television* (2000) and *The Sixties: 1960-1969* volume in *The History of American Cinema Series* (2003).