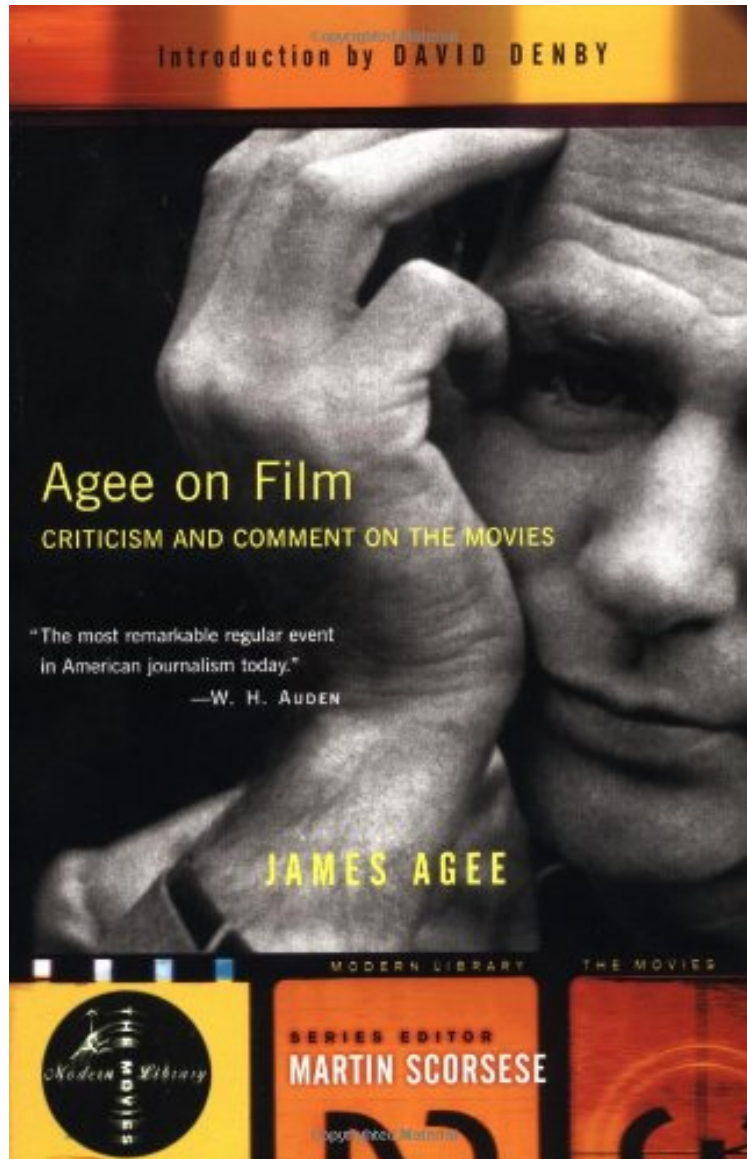


(Download) Agee on Film: Criticism and Comment on the Movies (Modern Library Movies)

## Agee on Film: Criticism and Comment on the Movies (Modern Library Movies)

James Agee

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**James Agee : Agee on Film: Criticism and Comment on the Movies (Modern Library Movies)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Agee on Film: Criticism and Comment on the Movies (Modern Library Movies):

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The Master Writes His LoveBy Michael FregaJames Agee was a

great writer (his book about the Dust Bowl is a classic). He continued to be a brilliant writer in his film reviews and his scripts. Thank you, Modern Library, for returning these collections of writing to us. They are wonderful to read and they make you think!

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Review Collection of the Greatest American Film Critic By R. Sanders I have little to say - except that every serious film student should be familiar with James Agee's astonishing writing.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Poet as Critic By R. Kopp Since college, maybe before, my absolute favorite piece of criticism of any kind has been James Agee's "Comedy's Greatest Era." It appeared in Life magazine in 1949, at a time when Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd and Harry Langdon--not to mention folks like Ben Turpin and Mack Swain--were in danger of being completely forgotten by the general public; and Charlie Chaplin was being viciously attacked on all sorts of ridiculous trumped up political and personal grounds. Note that Agee's specific project was to demonstrate why the silent era of comedy and these specific comedians were "great." He didn't shy away from using the word, but he did strive to make it in this instance as concrete as possible. He recounted the old gags in such a vivid way that people who had never seen the films laughed out loud just reading about them; he deconstructed the build-up to each howler with a precision that would be the envy of any mechanical engineer or CSI forensic detective. These gags were scaffolded in a way that didn't simply make you titter or guffaw: they explained something deep and profound and essential and eternal about the human condition, and Agee wasn't afraid to say so. Maybe what was most remarkable was that these comedians spoke in a silent language that was universal and cut across every dividing line imaginable. Agee was quietly indignant that we might lose this legacy forever. The only way he knew to preserve it was to find the right words to help people understand what he himself felt so instinctively. He lovingly detailed what was there on the surface for all to see but equally importantly he discovered a whole world of weird and wonderful living things lurking underneath. Agee found indelible ways to describe the persona of each performer. This is Agee on Langdon: "There was also a sinister flicker of depravity about the Langdon character, all the more disturbing because babies are pre-moral. He had an instinct for bringing his actual adulthood and figurative babyishness into frictions as crawly as a fingernail on a slate blackboard, and he wandered into areas of strangeness which were beyond other comedians." And this is Agee on Keaton: "No other comedian could do as much with the dead pan. He used this great, sad, motionless face to suggest various related things: a one-track mind near the track's end of pure insanity; mulish imperturbability under the wildest circumstances; how dead a human being can get and still be alive; an awe-inspiring sort of patience and power to endure, proper to granite but uncanny in flesh and blood." This is beautiful writing. Comparisons between the four comedians made clear their differences but also made us appreciate each one as a unique treasure. Even so, Agee was not above arguing their relative merits. "Of all comedians [Chaplin] worked most deeply and most shrewdly within a realization of what a human being is, and is up against. The Tramp is as centrally representative of humanity, as many-sided and mysterious, as Hamlet, and it seems unlikely that any dancer or actor can ever have excelled him in eloquence, variety or poignancy of motion." Now a reasonable person might object to this or any of Agee's other assertions, but because he builds his case from the ground up, based on direct observable phenomena, because he writes with the grace of a recording angel, no one could say that he hasn't made his case in the most persuasive manner imaginable. I believe that we only own ideas once we can articulate them. Until then, we're just borrowing them. Until we ourselves can articulate why a particular piece of art is great, we're really just borrowing the notion of greatness and there's no point trying to convert nonbelievers to our cause, however just. In "Comedy's Greatest Era"--reprinted here--Agee found words for things so many of us felt but felt hopeless to describe.

"In my opinion, [Agee's] column is the most remarkable regular event in American journalism today."--W. H. Auden James Agee was passionately involved with the movies throughout his life. A master of both fiction and nonfiction, he wrote about film in clean, smart prose as the reviewer for Time magazine and as a columnist for The Nation. Agee was particularly perceptive about the work of his friend John Huston and recognized the artistic merit of certain B films such as The Curse of the Cat People and other movies produced by Val Lewton.

From Library Journal Agee was an avid film reviewer for Time magazine and a columnist for the Nation as well as the author of several popular screenplays for his friend John Huston. This volume is among the first in the Modern Library's new paperback film series being edited by Martin Scorsese, who also provides an introduction. Film heads will jump on this. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From the Inside Flap "In my opinion, [Agee's] column is the most remarkable regular event in American journalism today."--W. H. Auden James Agee was passionately involved with the movies throughout his life. A master of both fiction and nonfiction, he wrote about film in clean, smart prose as the reviewer for Time magazine and as a columnist for The Nation. Agee was particularly perceptive about the work of his friend John Huston and recognized the artistic merit of certain B films such as The Curse of the Cat People and other movies produced by Val Lewton. About the Author James Agee (1909-1955) started his writing career as a reporter for Fortune, which led to his writing Let Us Now Praise Famous Men. In addition to film reviews, he wrote several scripts, including The African Queen and The Night of the Hunter. He won the Pulitzer

Prize for his novel *A Death in the Family*.