

Hollywood's High Noon: Moviemaking Society Before Television (The American Moment Series)

Professor Thomas Cripps

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Professor Thomas Cripps : Hollywood's High Noon: Moviemaking Society Before Television (The American Moment Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hollywood's High Noon: Moviemaking Society Before Television (The American Moment Series):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Good Book on the Film Industry Just After World War IIBy Roger D. LauniusMoviemaking before the latter 1950s and the rise of television has been the subject of numerous studies. This book explores the rise of the film industry, concentrating on the experience in Hollywood, and offering an analysis of the changes in the industry wrought by technology (sound pictures, color, cinemascope), business (the studio system, contract players, star power, vertical integration), and culture (the meaning of films, the experience of the viewer).Author Thomas Cripps does an excellent job demonstrating the rise of the Hollywood oligopoly, and the alternatives that arose to that system but could never quite break its control. He expends considerable effort discussing various genres that arose before World War II, especially westerns and gangster films.The high point of Hollywood, at least according to many in the industry, was its effort in World War II to make films that were both entertaining and helpful to the war effort. Cripps discusses this activity from the Anglophillic "Goodbye, Mr. Chips" (1939) through "Casablanca" (1942) to John Ford's semi-documentaries such as "They Were Expendable" (1945), as well as a host of other works. He also spends considerable effort unpacking the relationship of Hollywood to the Office of War

Information (OWI) and finds that the Hollywood moguls, who had spent their careers answering to their moneyed overlords in New York, had little trouble answering to OWI communicators in Washington. Cripps concludes the book with a discussion of the collapse of the studio system after World War II. He explains that this took place because of several key issues. First, the suburbanization of America meant that moviegoers abandoned their downtown theaters and the current metroplexes did not emerge until much later. Second, the sudden rise in family development, sparking the advent of the baby boom, meant that these new families sought entertainment that was more private than the public gathering of the theater. Third, television arose and this gave these new families entertainment that they could partake of together in their homes. Finally, government antitrust action broke apart the vertical integration that had dominated the movie industry in the prewar era. Cripps also discusses the experience of the moviegoer in the theater throughout the first half of the twentieth century. He finds that the shared experience of sitting with others in a darkened theater partaking of exotic adventures, romances, historical and futuristic times, and the like provided a unique experience unavailable anywhere else. This experience profoundly affected how people embraced the movies as a central part of modern culture. Also overlaying the entire book is the issue of film censorship. The industry both self-regulated itself and had overseers who regulated it to create film that reinforced specific cultural and national values while discouraging mindsets and actions that went against the status quo. This is a very interesting book and one that I would recommend for those seeking to understand this critical institution in twentieth century America.

Over the last twenty-five years, the field of cinema studies has offered a dramatic reassessment of the history of film in general and of Hollywood in particular. Writers have drawn on the methodologies of a number of disciplines--literary criticism, sociology, psychology, women's studies, and minority and gay studies--to deepen our understanding of motion pictures, the film industry, and movie theater audiences. In *Hollywood's High Noon*, noted film historian Thomas Cripps offers a lively narrative history of Hollywood's classical age that brings the insights of recent scholarship to students and general readers. From its origin during the First World War to the beginning of its decline in the 1950s, Cripps writes, Hollywood operated as did other American industries: movies were created by a rational production system, regulated by both government and privately organized interests, and subject to the whims of a fickle marketplace. Yet these films did offer consumers something unique: in darkened movie palaces across the country, audiences projected themselves--their hopes and ideas -- onto silver screens, profoundly mediating their reception of Hollywood's flickering images. Beginning with turn-of-the-century moving-picture pioneer Thomas Edison, Cripps traces the invention of Hollywood and the development of the studio system. He explores the movie-going experience, the struggle for social control over the movies through censorship, the impact of sound on the style and content of films, alternatives to Hollywood's oligopoly including "race" films and documentaries, the paradoxical predictability and subversive creativity of genre pictures, and Hollywood's self-proclaimed "shining moment" during the Second World War. Cripps concludes with a discussion of the collapse of the studio system after the war, due in equal parts to suburbanization, the emergence of television, and government anti-trust action.

"In this study the author has moved from his previous work on the treatment of African-Americans in film to a broader look at Hollywood itself in its studio heyday." -- Washington Post "Students and general readers -- and many specialists -- will learn a great deal from Thomas Cripps." -- Clayton Koppes, Oberlin College
From the Back Cover
In *Hollywood's High Noon*, Thomas Cripps brings together both the insight of recent scholarship in the field of film studies and the results of his own extensive research to trace the history of Hollywood from its turn-of-the-century beginning through the invention and development of the studio system to its heyday in the 1950's, just before television eclipsed the movies as America's Dominant entertainment medium.