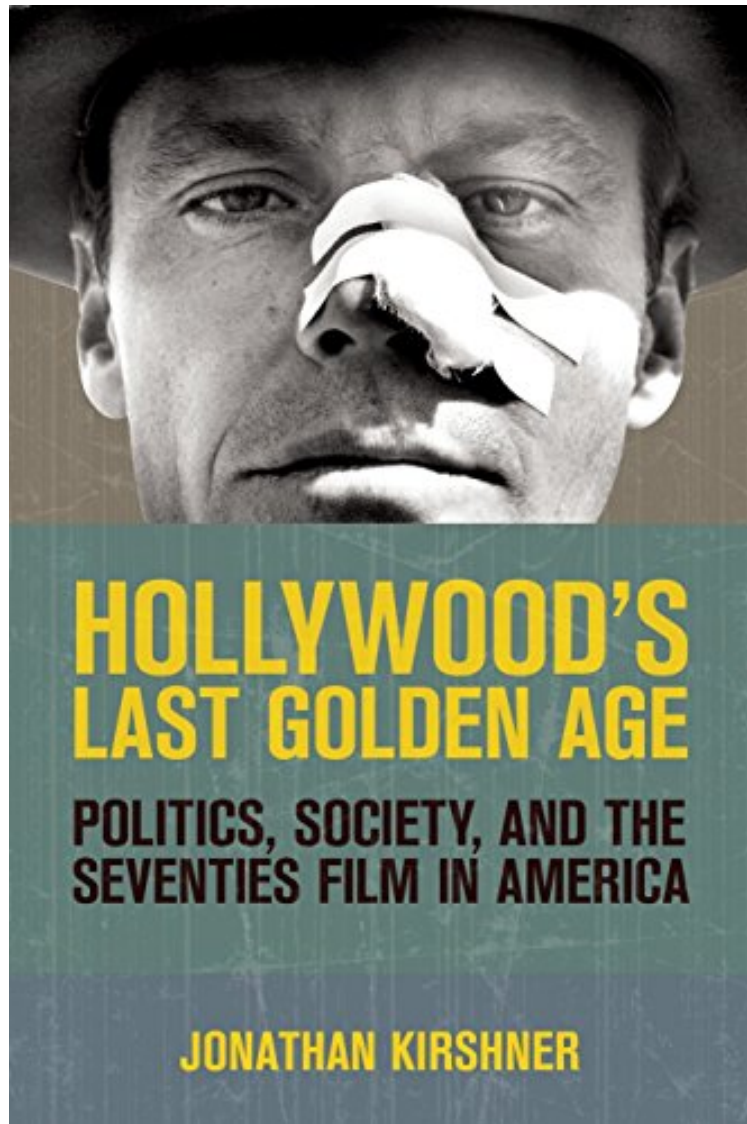


[Ebook free] Hollywood's Last Golden Age: Politics, Society, and the Seventies Film in America

Hollywood's Last Golden Age: Politics, Society, and the Seventies Film in America

Jonathan Kirshner

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Jonathan Kirshner : Hollywood's Last Golden Age: Politics, Society, and the Seventies Film in America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hollywood's Last Golden Age: Politics, Society, and the Seventies Film in America:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. "I'm a little worried about my future"By The Ginger ManWhen I

was in high school, my friends and I would go into Boston almost every weekend to see a movie. A new film directed by Mike Nichols or starring Dustin Hoffman would be an important event. The times were changing and this seemed somehow normal in our adolescent worldview. The movies not only reflected and reinforced those transformations but they put people our age on the right side of change and made us feel less alone and somehow superior. This was "the decade when movies mattered." Going to the movies has never been as important to me as during this time and, for the last thirty years or so, I have been vaguely dissatisfied in my experience viewing films. In a brief but well argued 200 pages, Jonathan Kirshner explains at last why this is so. The period 1965-1975 constitutes for Kirshner a distinct and identifiable era of cinema. Movies in this period were transformed from linear stories with unambiguous morals to "self-consciously gritty explorations of complex episodes that challenged the received normative structure of society." The origin of this transition was based in multiple factors. The end of Hollywood censorship freed the form while industry changes gave opportunities to new and younger filmmakers. Significant social and political upheaval shocked institutional foundations creating novel avenues for questioning values. The history of the film craft influenced new approaches. French New Wave directors brought a more personal, less polished style to subjects often critical of authority while American noir films from another transitional period (1945-1955) focused on the underside of American affluence and power. The result was a decade of character driven films often with a political text or subtext including an emphasis on moral ambiguity. The visual style was somehow less pristine, "shaky, darker, filtered or grainy." And they were aimed at a younger movie going audience who was also questioning its role in society. Widely divergent generational responses to these films were evident. In 1967, Bosley Crowther was the dean of American movie reviewers and had been writing about film for the New York Times since 1940. Panning Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* in no less than three separate columns, he complained that the movie gratified "the preconceptions and illusions of young people who had come of age with the Beatles and Bob Dylan, the philosophy of doing your own thing and the notion that defying the Establishment was beautiful and brave." Crowther was relieved of his position by the Times before the year was over. Kirshner spends much of the book analyzing movies from Hollywood's Last Golden Age. Films address generational conflict (*The Graduate*), war (*MASH*, *Catch 22*, *Little Big Man*), alienation (*Five Easy Pieces*, *King of Marvin Gardens*), paranoia about authority (*Parrallax View*, *Klute*), the poverty of affluence (*Seconds*, *Carnal Knowledge*), urban decay (*Little Murders*, *Midnight Cowboy*, *Taxi Driver*) and the demise of codes of behavior (*Wild Bunch*). The author provides as well a useful list of 100 films from 1965-1975 (although I take issue with omissions such as 1969's *Putney Swope* and *They Shoot Horses, Don't They*). Hollywood's Last Golden Age is a concise, well written survey of the times and of its cinema. While I feel comfortable giving it a rating of 4 stars, I have to say that, for people such as myself who sat in those movie theaters from 65-75, this book can be almost impossible to put down and has five star value. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic Book By JMG Buyer Should be required reading for any Film School student or film enthusiast. Great explanation of what New Hollywood era represented in the film industry as well as some of the major players and their ideas regarding their place within. The New Hollywood being a big break from the old studio system was a pivotal part of film history and should be given the deference it deserves. Kirshner's book was so so fantastic, I got my university library to order a copy for their permanent collection. What a great addition to any film history library! 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Captures the seventies political and moral culture, very good reading, no academic "cult studies" jargon. By Joan A Filler Kirshner proposes that as Hollywood was liberated from censorship that required moral certainty, (good guys and bad guys,) the serious directors, writers, and actors confronted moral ambiguity which was previously taboo. Now the subject of film was subject to debate. Starting his prologue with a tale from his youth on the joy of debating about films, ("arguments like these were rarely resolved, but they were not really meant to be") the author identifies his idea of great film-- its ability to engage, to raise questions, to make you talk loud and long about it. Simultaneously with the end of the Hollywood Codes, political events and social changes in the 1960's engaged moral concerns. In the movies, as in life, the evenly illuminated world of 1950's transformed gradually into a murkier place with shadows, uncertain identities, unheroic protagonists, ambiguous goals and outcomes. Kirshner's social history writing is vivid-- one understands the rising hopes and the devastating disappointments of the era that saw the Civil Rights Act passed, the assassination of powerful moral leaders RFK, MLK, the exposure of contemptuous and deceitful leaders in the release of the Pentagon Papers and the Watergate revelations. More lively and passionate are his succinct analyses of films from 1967-1976. There are about 20 he reads closely. He makes a compelling case that this was an era clearly set off from its surround, in which Hollywood's major successful products had characteristic intellectual concerns, visual and narrative innovations, that were tightly linked to the social and political developments of that period. The book delves deeply into the serious problems of the seventies-- race riots, urban decay and crime, economic and foreign policy crises, the Vietnam war and antiwar movement, intergenerational alienation. What I loved was revisiting the ethos, even the cliches, --the personal is political, question authority, --with this guide who revives it. Kirshner covers large number of the great films, many well known and some quieter gems with witty and sensitive style. He clearly immersed himself in the contemporaneous film criticism. It's as if he had lived through this complex time. Many chapter headings are taken from song lyrics- Dylan's are favorites. He includes delightful revealing bios of the directors and writers, fun stories about production crises and authorial tussles, always in the

service of enlightening us about the driving force of the films. Despite the passion and admiration Kirshner shows for film-makers of the seventies, he retains a discipline and perspective, like an anthropologist who has almost gone native, but holds still his observer status. At the end of the book he has a list of 100 films he suggests as the seventies films, 20 as cannon, subject to debate. I want to stop the world and watch all the films he discusses, with his book in my hand.

Between 1967 and 1976 a number of extraordinary factors converged to produce an uncommonly adventurous era in the history of American film. The end of censorship, the decline of the studio system, economic changes in the industry, and demographic shifts among audiences, filmmakers, and critics created an unprecedented opportunity for a new type of Hollywood movie, one that Jonathan Kirshner identifies as the "seventies film." In *Hollywood's Last Golden Age*, Kirshner shows the ways in which key films from this period including *Chinatown*, *Five Easy Pieces*, *The Graduate*, and *Nashville*, as well as underappreciated films such as *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, *Klute*, and *Night Moves* were important works of art in continuous dialogue with the political, social, personal, and philosophical issues of their times. These "seventies films" reflected the era's social and political upheavals: the civil rights movement, the domestic consequences of the Vietnam war, the sexual revolution, women's liberation, the end of the long postwar economic boom, the Shakespearean saga of the Nixon Administration and Watergate. Hollywood films, in this brief, exceptional moment, embraced a new aesthetic and a new approach to storytelling, creating self-consciously gritty, character-driven explorations of moral and narrative ambiguity. Although the rise of the blockbuster in the second half of the 1970s largely ended Hollywood's embrace of more challenging films, Kirshner argues that seventies filmmakers showed that it was possible to combine commercial entertainment with serious explorations of politics, society, and characters interior lives.

From Booklist The book's subtitle pretty much gives away the thesis here: American films of the 1970s were influenced by revolutions both social and political. The author redefines the seventies to encompass the late 1960s and to exclude the late 1970s, allowing him to focus on the emerging filmmakers and their works: Penn, Ashby, Mazursky, Scorsese, De Palma, Coppola, Rafelson, Cassavetes, and so on. Ardent students of the history of American cinema will no doubt experience a serious case of been-there, done-that (as the author admits, and his extensive bibliography elaborates, this is not a new subject), but, on the other hand, readers unfamiliar with the subject should find the book a real education. The author, a professor of government at Cornell, draws a clear correlation between the rather startling shift in American filmmaking (increased violence and sexual themes, more overt anti-establishment motifs, the rise of the antihero) and political and social events of the 1950s and early 60s (such as the sexual revolution, the war in Vietnam, the assassinations of key political figures, the Communist witch hunts). Libraries with active film-history collections will want to add this one. --David Pitt Jonathan Kirshner, a Cornell University political scientist with a compelling interest in film, argues that this decade (1967-1976) was Hollywood's last golden age. . . . [S]uch classics as *The Graduate* (1967), *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *Klute* (1971), *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *Chinatown* (1974), and *Shampoo* (1975) are subjected to intensive examination. These "close readings" are both the core and the strength of Kirshner's book (p. 2). They afford readers new ways of looking at these films, new insights into the conscious and unconscious motives of the filmmakers, and new frameworks for grasping the meanings and actions of the characters. . . . I found his book a joy to read and a refreshing reintroduction to the motion pictures of my youth." Jerold Simmons, *Journal of American History* (December 2013) "Renewed interest in Hollywood film of the 1970s, evident in documentaries, popular books, and a burgeoning reissue market, has generated myth and hagiography, and *Hollywood's Last Golden Age* supplies an important corrective to this tendency by substantiating the contexts for key films of the period. Readers of *Hollywood's Last Golden Age* will likewise be awakened to the ways that the political rhythms and feeling of this time reverberated through American screens, the way that cinema both announced and brought audiences into the 1970s." Nathan Holmes, *Journal of American Studies* "Kirshner's writing is lively and informative, and the book excels when he discusses long forgotten seventies films (such as, *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, *Mickey and Nicky*, and *The Yakuza*), suggest new ways to view popular films (although Michael Caine as a Nixonian character in *The Godfather, Part II* could have been taken further), or focuses on topics often ignored in surveys of New Hollywood (the rising skepticism many felt towards capitalism, as discussed in relation to *Nashville*, *Network*, and *Shampoo*). . . . Kirshner's book expands on many themes discussed elsewhere, but his skillful analysis and solid research, especially pertaining to the cultural politics of the era, serves as a great introduction to this rich era of filmmaking." Julie Lobalzo Wright, *The Journal of Popular Culture* (October 2013) "Kirshner . . . offers insightful, well-written interpretations of some two dozen films with briefer references to others that date from 1967 to 1976. . . . For Kirshner, the primary characteristics of this golden age include a 'moral ambiguity' that portrays the world in shades of gray rather than in black and white; plots driven by imperfect protagonists rather than by frenetic action; a concern for social and political implications; visual styles that were 'often shaky, darker, filtered, or grainy'; and a desire among filmmakers to create serious, meaningful works of art. A useful appendix lists 100 top films from this period, including 20 deemed canonical." Choice (May 2013) "Kirshner's commentary on these and other films is stimulating. He also provides a

useful appendix of one hundred Seventies films. Kirshner's book provides intriguing insights for anyone interested in the relation between film and wider culture."The Journal of American Culture (September 2013) "Thoughtful, interesting and engaging. . . . Kirshner succeeds at a difficult task. . . . [A]n excellent book, well argued, clearly written, and free of the theoretical jargon that plagues so much film scholarship."Robert T. Schultz, *History: s of New Books* (42:1, 2014) "The author, a professor of government at Cornell, draws a clear correlation between the rather startling shift in American filmmaking (increased violence and sexual themes, more overt establishment motifs, the rise of the antihero) and political and social events of the 1950s and early '60s (such as the sexual revolution, the war in Vietnam, the assassinations of key political figures, the Communist witch hunts). Libraries with active film-history collections will want to add this one."David Pitt, *Booklist* (1 November 2012) "Hollywood's Last Golden Age is an absorbing, well-structured look at the decade of American films that many consider the last great era of thoughtful, politically motivated filmmaking before the rise of the blockbuster. . . . For those who are already well versed in the period it functions as a great refresher which will likely fill in gaps in one's knowledge, and make one reach towards the DVD shelf for a viewing of one of the many remarkable and still-resonant films of the '70s."Ian Gilchrist, *Reel Ink* (March 2013) "Jonathan Kirshner argues forcefully and astutely that questing, questioning films from the late '60s into the 70s pushed their audience into consequential dialogue and debate. In like fashion, Kirshner's book does the same to powerful ends: Hollywood's Last Golden Age impels its readers to engage actively with the films and their times, and it opens a conversation that is fruitful and far reaching. It is a sharp, intelligent book about a moment when cinema really mattered aesthetically and politically."Dana Polan, New York University, author of *Scenes of Instruction* "Jonathan Kirshner writes fluidly on the political developments of the seventies and the history of the film industry in a way that will appeal to a wide range of readers who lived through the decade and experienced such films as *Chinatown* and *The Godfather* in a visceral way. This is the rare book that can be read with interest and profit by scholars and the general public alike a valuable addition to the growing literature on the seventies and an interesting take on the films of that decade."Edward D. Berkowitz, The George Washington University, author of *Mass Appeal: The Formative Age of Movies, Radio, and TV* "In Hollywood's Last Golden Age, Jonathan Kirshner does a very good job of placing many now-classic movies in relation to the cultural ferment underway in the 1970s. Kirshner draws expertly on a huge range of sources to construct an elegant sociopolitical and cinematic history of the era."Stephen Prince, Virginia Tech, author of *Firestorm: American Film in the Age of Terrorism* "Neophytes and scholars alike will learn a great deal from Jonathan Kirshner's engaging story of the last great period of American filmmaking. Younger readers may benefit most of all from this clear-eyed analysis of the terrifically interesting cultural politics of the predigital visual world."Thomas Borstelmann, E. N. and Katherine Thompson Professor of Modern World History, University of NebraskaLincoln, author of *The 1970s*About the Author Jonathan Kirshner is Stephen and Barbara Friedman Professor of International Political Economy at Cornell University.