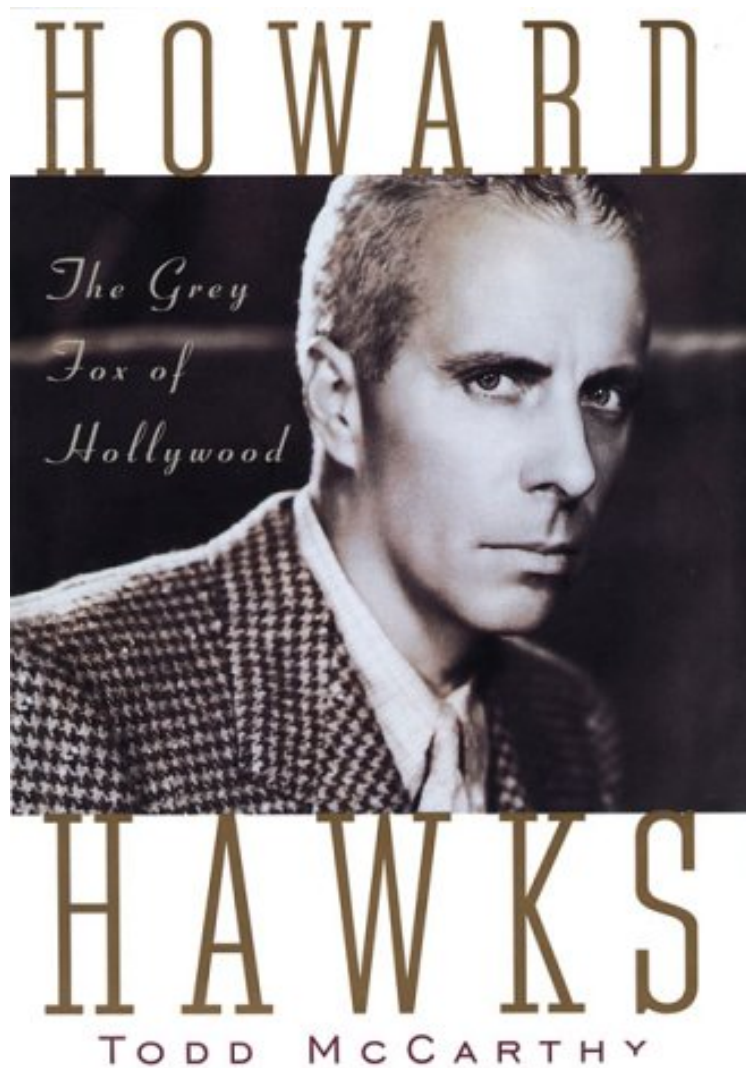


(Download) Howard Hawks: The Grey Fox of Hollywood

## Howard Hawks: The Grey Fox of Hollywood

*Todd McCarthy*

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**Todd McCarthy : Howard Hawks: The Grey Fox of Hollywood** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Howard Hawks: The Grey Fox of Hollywood:

17 of 18 people found the following review helpful. "Good Enough"By Michael SamerdykeThis is a very good book. Hawks apparently left no papers, and some aspects of his life are undocumented. (For example, McCarthy keeps mentioning Hawks' great friendship with Gary Cooper, but because of both men being dead and no documentation, Cooper remains a very shadowy presence in this book. Hawks' friendship with William Faulkner gets far more space, since Faulkner left papers.)So there is not a lot about "the inner Hawks." However, there is a lot about Hawks' films. Once the talkies begin, there is a chapter on practically every film Hawks made. I was fascinated by the stories behind

the films, how long it took some films to get made (Hatari began as an idea for a movie with Cooper), the films Hawks never made (apparently a very traditional vampire film), and his frequent tangles with Howard Hughes. McCarthy did a lot of research, and he does not uncritically accept the stories Hawks told (frequently told) about his work. So if you like the films of Howard Hawks and are familiar with books such as *Hawks on Hawks* and *Howard Hawks Storyteller*, this is a book that you will still get a lot out of. To use a term from Hawks' films: "This book is good enough." 5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Essential Reading For the Movie Fan By C. Legreid Todd McCarthy is that too rare biographer. His books can be read with enjoyment, they are not scholarly tomes intended to pulverize the reader into accepting the author's analytical brilliance, but fun and chock full of insight and information. Most of all they are well organized proceeding in a thoughtful logical manner. As a subject film director Howard Hawks was among the most colorful men to helm major film productions so it is surprising that there are so few good fun books about the man. The man and his movies. Few directors can match Howard Hawks record for quality films so this book is an essential guide to many of the greatest films ever made. Todd McCarthy takes the reader through the process of making films as *Bringing Up Baby*, *His Girl Friday*, *To Have Have Not* and so many others, therefore this biography explores the intricate web of personalities involved, mini biographies of actors as diverse as Humphrey Bogart, Cary Grant, John Wayne, Rosalind Russell, and so many more. *Howard Hawks: The Grey Fox of Hollywood* Is a delightful book by a gifted writer who actually takes the time to research his subject rather than relying upon plagiarized rewrites of tabloid trash. Todd McCarthy's brevity and wit are welcome in this realm of biography. 17 of 19 people found the following review helpful. About as thorough as we're likely to get. By Steven Daedalus Todd McCarthy has just about closed the book on Howard Hawks. It isn't that there is no more to be told about Hawks, particularly about his private life, it's that for one reason or another -- death or discretion -- no one is going to tell it. "Howard Hawks: The Grey Fox of Hollywood" gives us everything we wanted to know about Hawks' professional life, his deals with the studios, his treatment of his performers and crew, and then it gives us more than we needed to know. I frankly got bogged down in his cross-chases with moguls like Darryl F. Zanuck and idiosyncratic millionaire nuts like Howard Hughes. But it has to be admitted that McCarthy did his homework. My God, what a heap of information on display, and what a Mount Everest of papers and documents and letters and memoranda he must have dug through in order to unearth this stuff, going back all the way to the businesses run by Hawks' grandparents. (Was the business a success? No power on earth could drag the answer from me.) We also get a reasonably objective picture of Hawks' character. McCarthy is no fawning fan. When Hawks makes a stinker, McCarthy admits it and tries to figure out why. And we get Hawks as a person too. He was, in a word, dull. Dullness, it could be argued, was his most interesting trait. He was dull as the child of a wealthy Midwestern family and he didn't evolve over the trajectory of his life. He didn't even visit Europe until his professional responsibilities required it. Neither did President George W. Bush or Elvis Presley. This lack of curiosity could be called insular American. When you already are certain about things, why challenge yourself? This complacency is reflected in his plots (which he rewrote extensively during shoots) and even his technique. His directorial style is straightforward and scenes are shot from eye level. No razzle dazzle, no furbelows. And he stole from his earlier work shamelessly. He seemed to have two chief motives for making movies. (1) It was "fun", and (2) it made you a lot of money. Slow in every dimension, he rarely showed anger or any enthusiasm or amusement that required more than a smile for its expression. He gave his old friends and relatives occasional jobs but showed them little affection. If he hired some people repeatedly it was largely because he knew he could rely on them, not because he especially enjoyed their presence. He died in December, 1977. John Wayne spoke (briefly) at Hawks' funeral but hardly anyone else of note showed up. He had always been distant and reserved. Well -- except in a few regards. As a younger man he enjoyed gambling on horses, which sometimes landed him in considerable debt. He could be relied on to lie in ways that boosted his image. And he did have a few co-workers with whom he appeared to share an unspoken bond. William Faulkner was one. (Hemingway was not.) He and Faulkner were comfortable simply sitting next to each other, silently, except for an occasional drawled remark. The Australian actor Leo McKern met with Hawks when Kern was being considered for one of the parts. His description of Hawks' drawling interactional style is kind of amusing. "I have never met anyone who spoke or moved slower; a broad gesture with an arm took so long that it became an effort not to take the eyes from his face and follow its movement like a stoat-thralled rabbit; and yet the word it accompanied . . . 'e-v-e-r-y-w-h-e-e-r-e' . . . lasted as long as the gesture. I believe that it was long ago that he had simply decided that if anyone was going to come down with an ulcer, it was not H. H." Hawks went through women as if they were going out of style. The one he found most attractive, and took the usual advantage of, conformed to the same generic template -- beautiful, tall, outdoorsy, stylish with appearing to put much effort into it. Lauren Bacall, whom he turned into a star, was emblematic. He was married three times -- once to a woman who suffered from a mood disorder, next to a socialite, finally to a high-maintenance lady less than half his age. Which brings up a question that in the context of Hawks' life is inevitable. He had all the women he ever wanted. All he had to do was beckon. Yet they didn't remain with him for long, usually leaving of their own accord. So how was he in bed? He was about as dynamic in the sack as he was in his social life. In the 1930s, Jean Harlow expressed an interest in dating Hawks. It was arranged. Later, the panderer passed Harlow on the beach and asked her how it went, and she scowled and pinched her nose. Hawks had no religion or politics, but in turn-of-the-century small-town Indiana, you

didn't get too demonstrative about anything. There isn't much of the author in this biography. I kind of missed the personal touch. McCarthy missed some opportunities for guesses or wisecracks that might have been incisive or richly humorous. Not that anyone would want a tabloid expose, but, I mean, what ABOUT all that supposed homoerotic subtext in Hawks' work? Anyway, I got through the book, and although it has its longueurs, it includes just about everything you might want to know about Howard Hawks, one of America's iconic film directors -- a superb story teller.

Howard Hawks is the first major biography of one of Hollywood's greatest directors, a filmmaker of incomparable versatility whose body of work includes the landmark gangster film *Scarface*, screwball comedies like *Bringing Up Baby* and *His Girl Friday*, the Bogart-Bacall classics *To Have and Have Not* and *The Big Sleep*, the musical *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and aviation classics and Westerns like *The Dawn Patrol* and *Rio Bravo*. Sometime partner of the eccentric Howard Hughes, drinking buddy of William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway, an inveterate gambler and a notorious liar, Hawks was the most modern of the great masters and one of the first directors to declare his independence from the major studios. He played Svengali to Lauren Bacall, Montgomery Clift, and others, but Hawks's greatest creation may have been himself. As *The Atlantic Monthly* noted, "Todd McCarthy . . . has gone further than anyone else in sorting out the truths and lies of the life, the skills and the insight and the self-deceptions of the work." "A fluent biography of the great director, a frequently rotten guy but one whose artistic independence and standards of film morality never failed." -- *The New York Times Book Review*; "Hawks's life, until now rather an enigma, has been put into focus and made one with his art in Todd McCarthy's wise and funny *Howard Hawks*." -- *The Wall Street Journal*; "Excellent . . . a respectful, exhaustive, and appropriately smartass look at Hollywood's most versatile director." -- *Newsweek*.

From *Library Journal* As producer and director, Howard Hawks mastered such diverse genres as screwball comedy, Western, science fiction, musical, and hard-boiled gangster film. He possessed a natural gift for storytelling and a keen eye for talent. He constantly bucked the studios and censorship boards, yet he made no "personal" films and considered any film a failure if it did not reach an audience. Despite the success of his films, Hawks was always scrambling for work thanks to gambling habits, free spending, and IRS claims for back taxes. On the centenary of the complex man's birth, the chief film critic at *Variety* has produced the first comprehensive biography of Hawks, detailing his privileged early life and his numerous relationships with "dames." McCarthy also discusses Hawks's aloof behavior both on the set and at home, as well as his working methods with such varied figures as Howard Hughes, John Wayne, Cary Grant, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner. This exhaustively researched warts-and-all biography is a major contribution to film literature and should lead to a renewed appreciation of Hawks. Highly recommended. -- Stephen Rees, Levittown Regional Lib., Pa. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist* Howard Hawks (1896<sup>^</sup>-1977) was one of the leading directors of Hollywood's golden age, worked with its biggest stars (Bogart, Hepburn, Grant), and--pilot, notorious womanizer, Hemingway's drinking buddy--lived a colorful life straight out of one of his action movies yet has never been the subject of a full-scale biography. McCarthy obliges him, tracing Hawks' career from the silent era through his 1970 valedictory, *Rio Lobo*. Chief film critic for the show-biz trade paper *Variety*, McCarthy is an ideal chronicler of the life of this most commercial of great filmmakers. He uncovers the truth behind the oft-told anecdotes of the notoriously self-aggrandizing Hawks and reveals the secret of Hawks' success: the films he wanted to make--straightforward entertainments featuring big stars--were the same ones that the studios wanted to make and that, in most cases, the public wanted to see. So Hawks boasted an unmatched, unbroken string of 11 hits between 1938 and 1951, and while his contemporaries faltered after World War II, continued his career successfully into the 1970s. Gordon Flagg From *Kirkus SA* a pleasingly thorough, if not critically groundbreaking, retrospective of the works and life of Hollywood's most versatile (and, to some cineasts, best) director. Hawks was born into a successful midwestern mercantile family. Detailing the level and range of their business successes, film critic McCarthy (*King of the B's*, 1975) suggests how the confidence bred in Hawks by his family's position strengthened his determination when he came to Hollywood: He wanted to work in a number of different genres, and he wanted to remain independent of the big studios. Despite the odds, he did. McCarthy focuses with great and admirable detail on Hawks's films. His life was rowdy and colorful (he was a womanizer and a gambler), and McCarthy communicates the essentials without ever losing focus on the director's artistry. Especially fascinating is the chapter on *Red River*, a blend of the requisite quotes on the previously untapped acting ability of John Wayne (e.g., Ford's "I didn't know the sonofabitch could act!"), tales of sparring between Wayne and costar Montgomery Clift and Hawks's dissatisfaction with Joanne Dru, a concise analysis of the movie's importance to Hawks's artistic freedom, and not too much about the film's already much-discussed homoerotic intonations. Highlights from other chapters include fresh discussions of overlapping dialogue in the romantic comedies, recaps of the sometimes surprising public response to his films (too-cynical *Twentieth Century* was a box office dud), and end-of-chapter roundups of critical views of each film, notable for including not only reviews of the time but the opinions of film historians like Jeanine Basinger and little-known critics like Jean-Pierre Coursodon. Though the most

enjoyable book on Hawks remains Joseph McBride's *Hawks on Hawks*, this is an essential complement to it and to studies by Wood, Wollen, and others. It portrays in wide-screen format a life until now presented only in sketches. (16 pages photos, not seen) -- Copyright 1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.