

BOOK REVIEWS

Summer has brought another bumper crop of books on the cinema and related subjects. In talking to others – both in publishing and in the film world of Toronto – the question is asked, “Will it ever end?” I, of course, reply, “Books get in your eye.” Then it is the age old problem of those who want to make a fast buck (these fast ones are getting slower) or quantity versus quality. At times quality seems to be ahead, but with the following you will have to decide.

Making the Media Revolution: A Handbook for Video-Tape Production, Peter Weiner, \$9.95 Hard cover only.

It claims to be, “a complete guide to cameras, lenses, sound, animation, directing, editing, special effects and graphics.” This claim on the cover would make one immediately suspicious. The book has many illustrations, a number of wide margins and its author, Peter Weiner, received his M.A. in Communications in Education at NYU. For the beginner it is helpful, but for those who have had some experience I would think it is not a must. Good Luck Peter, you’re onto a good thing!

The Film Director, Richard K. Bare, Paper \$2.95.

This is worth mentioning because it is now in paperback and at this price – a real buy. Bare has had years of experience which he skillfully shares with you. He carries you into the world of Hitchcock, Wilder, Kubrick, Nichols, Stevens, Wise and Vidor as they work on the set. It is also of interest to the movie buff. When you know how the director works, movies are never quite the same.

Cinematography, J. Kris. Malkiewicz, \$7.95.

The response to this book is amazing. It is a “word of mouth” kind of thing. Designed as a guide to filmmakers and teachers, it takes a practical, well-illustrated approach to the art. The text does not drop into the familiar conversational jargon that **Making the Media Revolution** does (i.e. “He was a fun guy to work with.”) Malkiewicz has a European background in film-Poland. He has lectured at the Polytechnic in London and he now teaches film at the California Institute of the Arts. It is a book that can be used by the independent filmmaker. Terms are defined on the spot. It is not necessary to keep looking up the meaning of the particular reference he makes.

American Cinematographers Manual, \$15.50 (4th Edition).

The latest edition of the cinematographer’s bible. This edition contains everything except the date of the Second Coming.

Spellbound in Darkness, George C. Pratt, \$9.95.

A history of the silent film from the familiar stories of the magic lantern to the end of that unforgettable era. The book is beautifully illustrated and the affection for the topic never becomes sloppy or camp. The book also includes a number of extracts from scenarios. For the sheer enjoyment of reading these fragments the book is worthwhile, but there is more to it than that. It is the first major comprehensive history of the silent film. (I wish that term “silent” would be dropped. Perhaps “pre-verbal film” might be better. The “silents” were never and will never be “silent”.) “Street scenes, railway trains in motion, boxing bouts, bull-fights and military revolutions are projected in life-like animation upon a luminous screen, while the audience sits spellbound in darkness . . .” How many producers would like to learn that secret today!

A Journal of the Plague Years, Stefan Kanfer, \$9.00

Well timed with the Watergate hearings – Kanfer’s book especially to aspiring script writers and lovers of the cult. reminds us that the plague doesn’t leave, it just waits its chance to be welcomed again in Washington, D.C.

Essentially, it is about the vicious blacklisting of people in the entertainment business. This development is traced from the thirties and the forties through the McCarthy and HUAC horrors. It is a sad book to read. The young will discover that their heroes were not always brave. There are few brave men in this book on either side. The public, or rather the mob, were bystanders who must also share the guilt. One criticism of the book can be made: and that is of its style. For such a subject Kanfer’s breezy *Timese cum Varietiesque* show biz approach is not appropriate when these investigations often terminated the life work of an individual. It does join a body of work on this era. More and more the various historical aspects of the motion picture business and art are being built by this kind of devoted research.

Marilyn, A Biography, Norman Mailer, \$22.95.

This is the sort of research the studies on the motion picture can do without. Perhaps there is an audience for the lavish pictures and the fantasies that only a mind like (is there another?) Mailer’s could produce. The best guide to this volume is Pauline Kael’s review in the New York Times, July 22, 1973. Only Kael has the background to place Mailer in the proper perspective. The review is better than the text of the book. Kael writes about Monroe and Norman. Mailer writes on Marilyn and Mailer. Don’t let the difference escape you.

The Busby Berkeley Book, Tony Thomas & Jim Terry with Busby Berkeley. 250 photographs. \$16.95.

“In an era of breadlines, Depression and wars, I tried to help people get away from all the misery . . . to turn their minds to something else. I wanted to make people happy if only for an hour.” So Berkeley writes about that era. The book is a nostalgic delight. It is also depressing to realize that during the period when Berkeley did his extravaganzas the reality of life was grim in the extreme.

No film, no matter how entertaining, could put men to work or food on the table. What entertained the masses also distracted them from the larger political issues. If you can forget these matters for a moment and enjoy the re-creation of the films, the credits and Thomas’ excellent text (what Jim Terry did is impossible to detect) you’re in for a revelation. It is a pity that the films can’t be shown without scratches, breaks and blunted focus. It seems that only in Paris is it still possible to see mint prints of these rather dubious wonders.

Casablanca: Script and Legend, Howard Koch, \$9.95.

It was inevitable (after what Woody Allen did for **Casablanca**) that the script would become available. An attempt has been made by the publishers to give that forties look to the art work. It is almost beyond belief that they could go to so much trouble in one area and ignore other important details. The stills from the movie are atmospherically presented along with snowflakes, dust and bubbles. (Perhaps a little of B.B. got into them). However, the text is a delight to recall and **The Making of Casablanca** is the story of a routine movie’s development. Conceived in sin and born in travail, it survived its precarious origin by some fortunate combination of circumstances to become the hardest of Hollywood perennials, as tough and as durable as its anti-hero – Humphrey Bogart. Richard Corliss (**Hollywood Screen Writers**)

DAVID BEARD

supplied an analysis of the script. The book should appeal

The Films of Marlon Brando, Tony Thomas, \$13.75.

Although four books came out on Brando in the last few months since the Academy Awards, this is the best. It has received the least attention because the others rushed to the market place. It has also had a better critical reception and the sales are certainly encouraging. This is mostly due to the writing of Tony (**Busby Berkeley Book**) Thomas. Thomas also did **Films of Errol Flynn** for Citadel some years ago. It continues to be the best seller in the whole series. The present volume covers Brando's career from his stage appearance in **Streetcar Named Desire**, to **Last Tango In Paris**. Brando has not exactly endeared himself to his public, but that's his affair. Thomas has put it most precisely, "Marlon Brando is a paradox, a strange, convoluted man whose behaviour has been contradictory, ranging from rudeness and arrogance to great kindness and consideration." Here is a criticism and a tribute. Few will understand him, but few will deny that he is *the* actor of the last few decades.

So that is the crop this summer. There are of course more, but these are the ones that are sought and talked about. Fall is at hand and the writers start up again. Let's hope (along with the grapes) that they produce a "good Year". •

A lot can happen before you get it in the can

Your casting is perfect, your cameraman the best around, all is ready to shoot . . . then your lead breaks his leg or your film stock is faulty or the weather turns bad or the lab messes up and you're in trouble . . .

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Arthur Winkler, CLU

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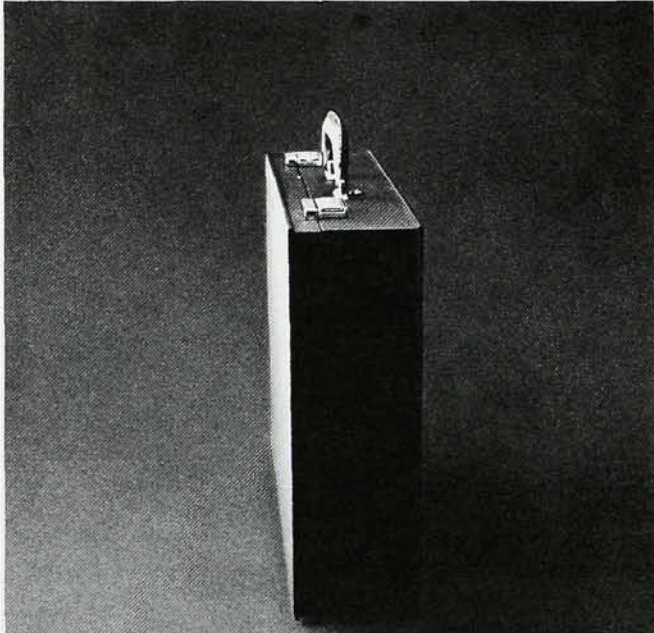
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