Cinematic Styles
A perceptive study by Richard Schickel. D. W. Griffith: An American Life explores the pioneer director's driving personality and the influence of his films on the film industry. Griffith's ability to cope with the changing patterns is attributed to Schickel in several novels, short stories, and Victorian sentimentality (Simons & Schuster $24.95).

In Films Before Griffith, a stimulating anthology edited by John L. Fell, the guiding light in film history in the 1980s, 1908 and the narrative forms of that decade's films are examined in the light of a new approach to the study of film history: From California Press $24.50 /10.95.

Phil Hardy's extensive and detailed study, The Western, includes 1600 films, listing production credits, plot summaries, and critical comments, with numerous illustrations. The book's chronological arrangement clarifies the impact of historical development and artistic recognition (Morrow $25).

A well-documented and entertaining survey by Derek Elley, The Epic Film explores the origins and development of the American epic film, covering many of the major films directed by D.W. Griffith between 1907 and 1927 (Viking $17.95).

The Reference Shelf
A major reference work of unequalled scope, Variety Film Reviews 1907-1980 is a massive 15-vol. set reproducing in facsimile, for the first time, the classified ads published in the authoritative weekly of the entertainment world. American and foreign movie critiques, with cast &-crew lists, are included in the prime source of knowledge about the evolution of cinema as art and industry. It is available to film buffs and serious students in most public and academic libraries, as well as in bookstores (Garland, $150 ea., $1750 set).

A new edition of Professional Cameraman's Handbook by Verne and Sylvia Carlson updates this standard guide widely used by both Directors of Photography and their assistants. Covering all current cameras and equipment, it describes in extensive detail 33 models of nine major 35mm cameras and related accessories, as well as film identification, assembling threading and troubleshooting procedures (Focal Press $24.95).

Michael T. Mullen's The Studio Directors (2nd edition) is a comprehensive, international listing of 1200 currently active directors and their 12,000 films. This serviceable, cross-referenced and directory volume provides vital statistics, some home addresses, agents and business managers (Lone Eagle, Beverly Hills, CA) $32.95.


The Media World
Now in paperback, Raymond Fielding's A Technological History of Motion Picture and Television apparatus including references to articles from the SMPTE Journal. They follow the development of both media as recorded in the reminiscences of pioneers and in reports about early television technology, cinematography, film stock, and sound (U. of California Press $10.95).

A handy and efficient text, Gerald Millerson's Video Camera Techniques provides reliable information on characteristics and uses. Whether in studies of technology and historical analysis, the book's potential is discussed here with competence and explicitness (Focal Press $13.95).

The latest revised edition of Herbert Zettl's basic text, Television Production Handbook, translates into practical terms the medium's latest technical advancements by focusing on their interconnections with existing procedures and equipment. This 4th edition also considers the ethical elements involved in production, such as graphics and design, and directorial styles (Wadsworth, Belmont, CA, $27.95).

Writing for Television and Radio, Robert U. Hilliard offers a career-oriented textbook that covers comprehensively the skills required for successful professional scripting. Whether dealing with commercials or situation series, soap operas, or sports talk shows, educational programs or drama, Hilliard adopts a broad-and-butler approach to the writer's craft, providing exercises and specific examples of scripts and copy actually used on the air (Wadsworth, Belmont, CA, $19.95).

TURN OUT THE STARS BEFORE LEAVING
by John C. Lindsay

Architectural historians have tended to neglect motion-picture theatres, in spite of the importance of certain examples of the worst of spatial Victorian and Edwardian decorative overkill, filtered through the dubious tastes of the modernist. Today, with the strict function of modern architecture less in favor than it once was, many once-despised turn of the century buildings are being re-evaluated. Turn Out The Stars Before Leaving shows what enormous color and variety existed in the great large cinema buildings, many of which, unfortunately, can no longer be seen.

Theatre historian John Lindsay has spent seven years researching this small but lavishly illustrated volume. From the earliest innovators in which Mary Pickford wrote shortly before her death, the book takes its frankly anecdotal tone. The structure, with chapters on the types of theatre, the theatre itself, the phenomenon of the cinema organ, and the fate of the buildings, derives from Ben Hall's groundbreaking The Best Remaining Seats. While Lindsay's prose is sometimes fumpy and disjointed, the photographs and captions which make up much of the book never fail to intrigue and inform.

As Pickford noted in her introduction, the great movie theatres aimed to impress. While Canada's small population precluded such huge theatres as the Roxy in New York, the Fox in Detroit, or the Chicago in Chicago, Lindsay clearly shows how such theatres as the Capitol in Montreal, Ottawa, Halifax, Winnipeg, Vancouver and even small cities like Brampton, could rightly claim to have great movie houses in the 1920s.

There were two types of theatre design. The “atmospheric” theatres were grand illusions indeed with their painted ceilings resembling open sky and fantastic decoration ranging from the Moorish of the aptly named Grenada in Sherbrooke, Quebec, to the medieval hall of the Capitol in Halifax. Perhaps the highest achievement of this type, and the most famous in Canada, was the highly detailed and splendid theatre that was the Loews Winter Garden in Toronto, with its proscenium shaped like trees, handpainted foliage hanging over a stage curtain depicting a woodland glade. The color photographs show an amazing state of preservation, in spite of the theatre's having been closed for fifty years.

No less impressive were the hardtop theatres, many designed by Thomas Lamb, which were intended to overwhelm with their opulence. As the photographs of the Palace and Loew's in Montreal, the Capitol in Ottawa, the Imperial in Toronto and the Orpheum in Vancouver show, nothing was spared in scale and decoration of the auditorium, the lobby or the stage. The arrival of the Depression ended the era of the great movie palaces, although there was a revival of sorts after the war, when such theatres as the Odeon Carlton and University in Toronto were built. Lindsay, who has been active in the attempts to halt the demolition of the latter house, laments the decline in showmanship and presentation the minuscule theatres in the shopping malls represent. Though Canada escaped the decline of its urban centers that saw the large American theatres sink into disrepair and disuse, houses fell victim to the wrecker, among them the Capitol in Montreal, the Capitol in Ottawa and the Odeon Carlton less than thirty years after it opened. Many of the others have been subdivided, including the Loews and Palace in Montreal and the Odeon in Toronto, the largest in the country. However, John Lindsay ends on optimistic note, citing the survival of the Orpheum in Vancouver and the Odeon in Quebec City, and the restoration of the Imperial in Montreal, as evidence that the great movie theatres may yet survive.

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