



# A Short History of Film

*Wheeler Winston Dixon , Gwendolyn Audrey Foster*

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## **A Short History of Film** Wheeler Winston Dixon , Gwendolyn Audrey Foster

The history of international cinema is now available in a concise, conveniently sized, and affordable volume. Succinct yet comprehensive, A Short History of Film provides an accessible overview of the major movements, directors, studios, and genres from the 1880s to the present. More than 250 rare stills and illustrations accompany the text, bringing readers face to face with many of the key players and films that have marked the industry.

Beginning with precursors of what we call moving pictures, Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster lead a fast-paced tour through the invention of the kinetoscope, the introduction of sound and color between the two world wars, and ultimately the computer generated imagery of the present day. They detail significant periods in world cinema, including the early major industries in Europe, the dominance of the Hollywood studio system in the 1930s and 1940s, and the French New Wave of the 1960s. Special attention is also given to small independent efforts in developing nations and the corresponding more personal independent film movement that briefly flourished in the United States, the significant filmmakers of all nations, censorship and regulation and how they have affected production everywhere, and a wide range of studios and genres. Along the way, the authors take great care to incorporate the stories of women and other minority filmmakers who have often been overlooked in other texts.

Compact and easily readable, this is the best one-stop source for the history of world film available to students, teachers, and general audiences alike.

## **A Short History of Film Details**

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# **From Reader Review A Short History of Film for online ebook**

## **Paul says**

This book is an attempt at nothing less than a history of film, from the beginning to the present.

It starts in the beginning, with Thomas Edison and George Melies and the film of the Jules Verne story From the Earth to the Moon (that's the one where the Man In The Moon suddenly gets a spaceship in the eye). From there, the book explores the silent film era, the coming of sound, the patriotic and propaganda films that were produced during World War II, film noir, the sudden freedom in subject matter that happened in the post-war era and French New Wave. The book ends with an exploration of new digital technology, and the fact that films no longer have to be shot on actual film.

It also looks at films around the world, during each era, including from countries that were not known for their cinematic output. It also specifically mentions many, many films, some of which are probably gone forever.

This book may be a little light in the overall film analysis, but, remember, the title is A Short History of Film, not A Long and Detailed History of Film. For everyone else, this book is very much worth the time. The casual reader and the film lover will learn more than they ever wanted to know about film history.

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## **Roland says**

This was a decent introduction to film history, but there were some annoying errors that shouldn't exist in a book with two authors. Just off the top of my head, they say that Orson Welles directed Journey into Fear (he didn't, even though some people claim he directed parts of it), and they also say that there are different endings for King Kong vs. Godzilla for the US and Japan, which has always been a myth. Other than that, it's a good overview of the history of film, and I did learn some interesting stuff that I didn't know before.

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## **Eileen says**

I absolutely loved the topic, but this textbook wasn't as helpful/ interesting as it could have been. A lot of the text was just lists of movies, which made it really hard to follow.

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## **Sam Crisp says**

A thumbnail history of world cinema. The chapters toggle between Hollywood and the rest of the world. The book makes an effort to give decent representation to women directors. The book is mostly just a big, annotated list of movies to watch as a starting point for various periods/nations of cinema. It's good at doing this. Gives you a lot of movies to watch but you'll definitely want to dig deeper.

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## **Realini says**

A Short History of Film by Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster  
10 out of 10

Notes and thoughts on other books are available at:

- <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list...> and <http://realini.blogspot.ro/>

A History of Film is fascinating, even when short.  
And the brevity of the work is relative.

At fifteen hours in audiobook format, it is not exactly an afternoon read, even if it would definitely be enjoyable at the beach.

It is not light and the subject matter is colossal in magnitude and scope, so in this sense it is appropriate to call it short.

It is a joy ride that is also instructive, for it will familiarize the reader with names that might have escaped him.

We hear about the evolution of the Coen Brothers, from their first film noir *Blood Simple*, moving to *Raising Arizona*, *Hudsucker Proxy*, *Fargo*, *The Big Lebowski* and more recent hits like *No Country For Old Men*.

Werner Herzog is another of the many cineastes mentioned in this gem of a book, with his first production that was made with an apparently stolen camera, his collaboration with the edgy, haunted, magnetic, incandescent and uncontrollable- because probably somewhat mad-Klaus Kinski on magnificent works like *Aguirre- The Wrath of God*, the adventurous *Fitzcarraldo* and what extraordinary that entailed.

In fact, in a documentary on his cooperation and frequent clashes with "His Dear Friend" Klaus Kinski, Werner Herzog explains and shows the wild territories where they filmed, the leading actor fought with colleagues, accidents and injuries, with the incredible transportation of a whole ship across the mountain, which takes place in *Fitzcarraldo* and was actually done in real life and not brought to screen with any special effects.

The list of important artists, directors, heads of studio, actors and finally various financial and multinational companies involved in the film industry and mentioned in this fantastic book is impressive.

The reader finds about Charlie Chaplin and his on screen and real life events, with his inclusion on the infamous black list, together with other celebrities- Trumbo, Edgar G. Robinson and others, sometimes named by their colleagues.

Neorealism in Italy and its influence on the so many other directors is emphasized with masterpieces as *The Bicycle Thief*- one of the best ten movies ever made on various lists- *La Terra Trema*, *Paisan*, with the latter mentioned by Martin Scorsese in the documentary *American Cinema* as one of the productions that have had a huge impact on him.

Some films that have marked a landmark, like the aforementioned *Bicycle Thief* have their story briefly narrated, with details once in a while, regarding the production, backstage or technological achievement. Film makers from around the world are also mentioned with the homage they deserve- Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, Roberto Rossellini and his affair with Ingrid Bergman, who had a child with the director, compromising their careers.

In more recent times, the ascension of Spike Lee is mentioned, up to his later achievements, like Malcolm X, which had serious financial problems, with backers pulling out afraid that the subject and hero will inflame spirits and cause riots, so that the director had to enlist Oprah Winfrey and Bill Cosby to support the film Kathryn Bigelow is one of the women directors that have achieved great success, even if the book was completed before her crowning achievement in 2008 with the Hurt Locker; it touches on her success Point Break and K-19.

In the past, the studios have had a tremendous power over stars and staff who had been under contracts, up to the Olivia de Havilland ruling, in which the actress won, a victory that had eluded Bette Davis when she had tried years before.

It may be an exaggeration in the other direction today, when a few celebrities have an astonishing power to launch or sink projects, their name on the short list could send the film beyond the sixty million dollar budget, before any scene is even shot, for some stars have passed the twenty million dollar benchmark a long time ago.

Alas, many if not most are in a category that I have no desire to watch- Avengers, Transformers and stars that I personally do not like in any case, like Dwayne Johnson "The Rock", fantastically nominated as the best actor of 2016, or 2015 and Melissa McCarthy, in the same spot for actresses.

It is exhilarating to read about a genius like Elia Kazan and his involvement in masterpieces like A Streetcar Named Desire, On The Waterfront, with the latter now seen as a condemnation of trade unions.

At the same time, the director, John Wayne, Ronald Regan and others seemed to have been involved in fighting the communist influence in Hollywood and therefore Elia Kazan was cheered by some in audience and disapproved of by many who attended the Academy Awards ceremony at which an honorary prize was given to the latter.

On both sides of the barricades we could find Ayn Rand, Robert Taylor- as one of the first friendly witnesses- Walt Disney, Gary Cooper and opposing them Humphrey Bogart, John Huston, Gene Kelly and others who had to abandon their "committee for the first amendment"

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### **Nicole says**

The writing is clear and it is a very good overview of world film since its inception. "Short" history is slightly misleading. It is not short. It is comprehensive, and at times feels like it goes on forever.

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### **H.P. Holo says**

This is easily one of the best film books that I've ever read. Covering both American and world cinema, it provides a quick but nonetheless effective overview of the films and filmmakers important to each era of film history. Each chapter is also divided up into sections no longer than 3 pages, which makes it easy casual reading. Highly recommended for even the most casual of film fans.

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## **Kuljinder Singh says**

breezy read , a comprehensive book about world cinema I thoroughly enjoyed

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## **Timothy says**

This book seems like it must have been tedious to write, and unfortunately that sense of exhaustion carries through to the reader. I'm not going to knock it too hard, because this is a very comprehensive and informative book. I was never a film student, so I got a lot out of reading it. The focus on non-Hollywood cinema is especially refreshing. But the writing is uninspired and repetitive, and after a while boredom sets in; the broad range of the book keeps the authors from engaging in detailed analysis. This is a good introduction and an easy read, but it is not particularly satisfying in its own right.

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## **Amanda Williams says**

Wow, this is a very detailed and comprehensive guide of the film industry. You can always count on this author to do their research. This book covers everything from silent films to the films of the present day now. It also explains how the industry differs from country to country. Very detailed and fully researched piece of work. This guide is incredible and well worth the price. Would definitely be interested in reading more from this author.

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## **Leonard says**

I checked this book out of the library, planning to review it superficially, looking at only a few films and directors, but ended up reading large portions of it. It grabbed my attention and kept it. I found it noteworthy that, even though numerous films of Joel and Ethan Coen are mentioned, "O Brother Where Art Thou," is not; and this book like "1001 Films You Must See Before You Die," does not mention the great Danish director Susanne Bier. Obviously they can't mention everyone but omitting Bier seems like a glaring omission and raises questions about the credibility of the book.

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## **Adam Hegg says**

teaching a film as literature class this fall and this was a helpful primer. by no means exhaustive but also doesn't claim to be.

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## **Alex Kartelias says**

Learned a lot from this book. It has revealed my ignorance in foreign films as well as my cinematic illiteracy. Even if it is just an introduction, you can't go wrong with reading it.

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## **Helene says**

It is not an easy task to cover over one hundred years of film history in one book, but this one succeeds-somewhat.

The book covers American and world cinema equally, which is commendable. I learned about some films and directors I was not familiar with before. The books contains many illustrations. This should be a helpful guide for those who are beginners to film. Understandably, as the book gets closer to present age and the world of film grows vaster, everything is covered in a much more surface way, with less and less detail.

My only significant complaint about the book is the omission of Milos Forman in the (very short) section on the Czech New Wave. The authors' goal of including female and minority filmmakers who were largely ignored by history lead them to ignore one of the most important Czech New Wave directors-who also went on to be an important director in America.

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## **Ed says**

It was OK. As I should have expected, an attempt to cover a century+ of world cinema in a book of this size was bound to be more surface than depth. But I was introduced to a number of names and movements that are now clearer in my mind.

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