

(Ebook pdf) Matinee Idylls: Reflections on the Movies

Matinee Idylls: Reflections on the Movies

Richard Schickel

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#5759120 in Books 1999-07-20Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.24 x 1.16 x 6.38l, .0 #File Name: 1566632609318 pagesFirst Edition, First Printing 1999. Published by Ivan R. Dee. Chicago, Illinois. | File size: 68.Mb

Richard Schickel : Matinee Idylls: Reflections on the Movies before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Matinee Idylls: Reflections on the Movies:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Hits And MissesBy A CustomerI generally like Richard Schickel a lot. I find his film reviews to be mostly on target and in those times I disagree with him, I at least come away with a

slightly perspective. I wish I could say the same for this collection of essays. Written over the course of many years and collected for this volume, they reflect the best and the worst of Richard Schickel, sometime within the same essay. The best chapters are either the ones that move away from critical theory and discuss specific actors or directors from a specific perspective or the ones that discuss films from the point of view of the general movie-going population. In particular, I thought his analysis of the American Film Institute's 100 Years 100 Movies (for which he was both a voter and a producer of the television special) to be exemplary. He was able to put into words what was probably on the minds of everyone who has debated that subject and address certain questions that were probably not raised before. He also pays nice tributes to certain icons of the Hollywood community with genuine affection that is nice to see, particularly coming from a critic. Schickel doesn't really look down his nose at anyone, regardless of his personal taste in their work. The essays tend to bog down when they become more like a memoir. Not to say that some of his experiences don't make entertaining anecdotes, but I think that people read Richard Schickel for insights into the movies and for his valued opinion, not for insights into himself. It's unfortunate that I felt that certain essays were not worth reading beyond the first few pages. However, most of the essays do contribute something as far as provoking thought, and I suppose that is better than most books of this nature. Having to pick and choose what selections you read doesn't mean it's not worth reading, but it makes you wish that the entire book was more like the good stuff.

Some of the movies' greatest figures, some of the most important issues raised by the medium, come under close, highly personal, and deeply informed reflection in this new book by one of our most prominent and influential critics. A pleasure to read...intelligent, well-informed, insightful and unfailingly gracious. Martin Scorsese

.com By his own reckoning, Richard Schickel sits in an interesting place in movie history, between the geezers who still recall falling under D.W. Griffith's spell and the current crop of cinephiles who dig the wrong parts of the past--Douglas Sirk's *Written on the Wind*, say, rather than his delirious *All That Heaven Allows*. It's a clever distinction, and its brothers and sisters are everywhere in Matinee Idylls. The author of a small library of books about movies and moviemakers, a producer of television documentaries, and *Time*'s longtime cinema guy, Schickel's authority on movie history is evident in these pieces gathered from 1984 to the present. Whether taking on stars (Bette Davis, Charles Laughton, Laurence Olivier), directors (Frank Capra, Sam Fuller, Satyajit Ray), or trends (the halcyon '50s and '60s when Americans watched foreign films), Schickel shows us what is fractured, forgotten, misunderstood, or just not gotten by audiences about his subjects. Frank Capra, he reminds us, regularly saw, and put into his pictures, the sweetness and the menace of ordinary folk. Greta Garbo's dwindling stock is regrettable but understandable: her star vehicles were dead things that mostly reflected her ego. Sam Fuller? He was a "movie bozo" who could still charge his screen with "the shock of the transgressive." Writing in a cool rather than a hot style, Schickel's draw is cumulative. At last, he seems the best kind of critic, armed with a fan's love, infinite knowledge, and a calm, unwavering eye. --Lyll Bush
From Publishers Weekly
Already the author of more than 20 books (Clint Eastwood; *The Disney Version*; etc.), *Time* film critic Schickel's now delivers a collection of 20 short pieces that take an introspective look at directors and actors past and present. Some of Schickel's treatments are standard, though diverting film-buff fare: admiring pieces on Greta Garbo, Bette Davis and Laurence Olivier, for example. Others evidence a more theoretical orientation, such as an analysis of Sam Fuller as a "sort of Charles Ives, drawing on the vernacular only to subvert it with a big, blating unforgettable off-key note." Yet other pieces, like "Cinema Paradiso: The Rise and Fall of a Film Culture," analyze film through its economic and historical contexts. Most interesting is Schickel's exposure of the connection between the film censorship guidelines of the Breen Office ("less than accurately known to the public as the Hays Office") and Catholic mores: he notes that Breen even obtained church approval to engage a Jesuit priest to draft the famously puritanical movie codes. Schickel writes with extensive knowledge of mainstream American film, but his approach is eclectic. In his preface, he mocks "the gibberish of post-structuralist academic criticism," for example, but many of his essays slip into post-structuralist terminology ("memory is the great deconstructor of movies"; "the moguls were fiercely ethnocentric"). Evincing a nostalgia for classic Hollywood narrative, his casual ramblings are not rigorously intellectual, but offer unusually good-natured commentary in the notoriously difficult world of film criticism. (Nov.)
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From Booklist
The author of several star bios, Schickel is best known as *Time*'s movie reviewer. The contents of this volume are products of the occasions when he has been able to shed weekly deadlines and write at leisure about topics he finds more meaningful than the latest Adam Sandler epic. Most deal with figures from earlier cinema. Schickel offers fresh insights into such luminaries as Greta Garbo and Bette Davis, but more rewarding are his appraisals of such now less celebrated figures as director King Vidor and Charles Laughton, "a star in a character actor's body." Although Schickel's specialty is American film, heartfelt tributes to Italy's Federico Fellini and India's Satyajit Ray appear here. The most provocative essay bemoans the disappearance of the film culture of the '50s through the '70s, when a veritable community of cineasts supported foreign movies and serious American films. That community largely vanished in the wake of *Star Wars* and Hollywood's subsequent obsession with blockbusters. Its spirit lives on in Schickel's passionate commitment to cinematic art. Gordon Flagg