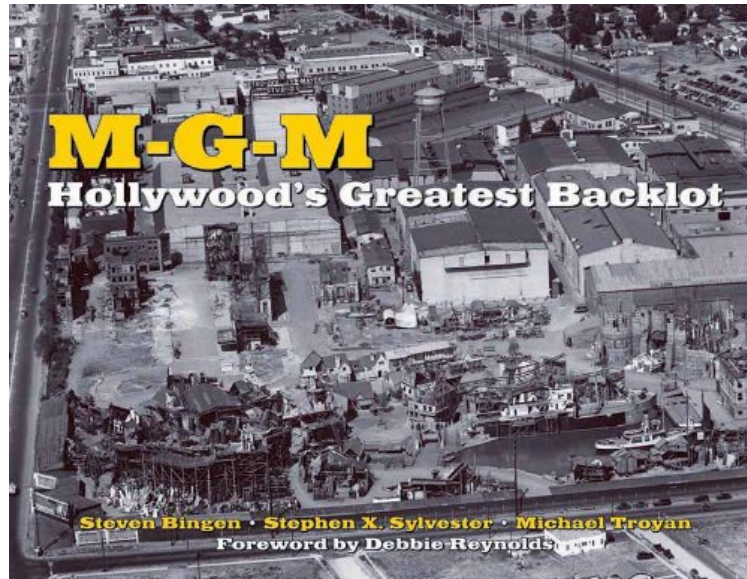


(Free read ebook) MGM: Hollywood's Greatest Backlot

## MGM: Hollywood's Greatest Backlot

*Steven Bingen, Stephen X Sylvester, Michael Troyan*  
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**Steven Bingen, Stephen X Sylvester, Michael Troyan : MGM: Hollywood's Greatest Backlot** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised MGM: Hollywood's Greatest Backlot:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. MGM: America's Brigadoon By Bruce K. Hanson, author of For the Record: Confessions of a Vinyl- Soundtrack Junkie The new book, MGM, Hollywood's Greatest Backlot, is at once a compelling social history rather than just an architectural survey of the sets, administrative buildings, and soundstages of Hollywood's greatest studio of the thirties, forties, and fifties. It truly is our Brigadoon, a city within a city within a country that made real countless myths and legends that could be experienced again and again on the celluloid screen. Brigadoon can only reappear once every hundred years, thus it's history has been short without too much social consequence, MGM not only brought to life visions of granduer it also trained generations on how on how to live an idealized life. Who hasn't watched an Andy Hardy film, Meet Me In St. Louis, or one of the Dr.Kildere entries and reflected or even measured the normality of their own families against these films? Wasn't Dad supposed to be as kind and understanding as Judge Hardy? Wasn't Mom supposed to be as wise and warm as Esther Smith's mother in St. Louis? And who hasn't, at one time or another, splashed in the rain or sung a few bars of Singin' in the Rain during a friendly down pour? There are so many moments from MGM films that have been cemented in the social consciouness. What is so unique about this new book is that the authors recognize that the soundstages and outdoor lots played just as important characters in the films they appeared as the actors themselves. It's part of what gave MGM its look (in addition to great cinema photography, costume designers, set designers, hair stylists, and those who created the often beautiful posters and publicity portraits). Authors Bingen (whose Warner Bros. book is also a treat), Sylvester and Troyan take the reader on a virtual tour of MGM, inside and out. There are maps of the backlots, aerial views of the studio, and best of all, beautiful and detailed photos of each studio outdoor set where you can compare the changes as they were redressed to fit the specific needs of the motion picture being filmed there at that time. Vincente Minnelli had to fight tooth and nails to get his "St. Louis Street" built (for \$208,275, an astronomical sum in 1943 when the film

started shooting) rather than refurbish the Andy Hardy Street (for a mere \$58,275 as Cedric Gibbons saw it). Yet both streets were utilized over the years which more than paid back their original costs. For example, "The St. Louis Street" show up in *The Long, Long Trailer* with much amusement as well as in such films as *Cimarron* and *All Fall Down*. The Andy Hardy Street was also used in *Summer Holiday*, *Babes in Arms*, *Strike Up the Band*, and even in one of the *Thin Man* films. The authors stress its iconic nature as a forerunner of "family" television series such as *Father Knows Best* and *The Brady Bunch*, which only further heightened the image of the "All American Family," something that many politicians still stick to. In addition to being enlightened just how these backlots influenced (and still influence) our lives, this book is also plain fun to look at. Where else can you view Tarzan's jungle lot, the Showboat lake, Waterloo Bridge, and so many others between two covers of such well documented facts? And it seems quite appropriate to have a foreward by Debbie Reynolds who once fought to have the MGM backlots preserved as an amusement park of sorts long before Universal did the same with theirs. This MGM backlot book is an important record of a studio and story that took place once upon a time; that was crumbling even as it continued to enhance the dreams of film goes around the world. But like a *Brigadoon*, MGM will keep coming back; with each viewing of its masterpieces as well as its lesser achievements. Although self-described as the studio with more stars than in the heavens, this book illuminates the heavens rather than the stars.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. This book's big format is perfect for poring over the richly detailed photos. By Backlot Lover tells me that I have now owned this book for 5 years. What a half-decade of pure pleasure I have received from this one purchase! While I am not in the habit of awarding 5 stars to anything, this is one where I can find nothing wrong with it. The few negative reviews I read were from buyers who obviously did not read the part of the title that says "backlot." Yes, this is mainly about sets and inanimate objects, and that is what the book title clearly states. A few stars are incidentally thrown into the photos. This book's big format is perfect for poring over the richly detailed photos. I suppose if I had to find some negative, it would be that I would like to see some color photographs of the later years. Certainly, the overwhelming majority will be black and white, because that is MGM's era.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. MGM The Cadillac of Hollywood studios! By Thomas P. Clyde Great book. I enjoyed seeing the back lot at MGM like I never have before. I gave this book 4 stars because I felt like it ignored one of the best films MGM ever made. "The Wizard of Oz". How could "The Wizard of Oz" hardly get written about is beyond me. I have seen the sets for "The Wizard of OZ" in other books. They are a sight to behold. I just couldn't give it 5 stars for this slight by the authors. I still highly recommend this fascinating book. I really enjoyed it.

M-G-M: Hollywoods Greatest Backlot is the illustrated history of the soundstages and outdoor sets where Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer produced many of the worlds most famous films. During its Golden Age, the studio employed the likes of Garbo, Astaire, and Gable, and produced innumerable iconic pieces of cinema such as *The Wizard of Oz*, *Singin in the Rain*, and *Ben-Hur*. It is estimated that a fifth of all films made in the United States prior to the 1970s were shot at MGM studios, meaning that the gigantic property was responsible for hundreds of iconic sets and stages, often utilizing and transforming minimal spaces and previously used props, to create some of the most recognizable and identifiable landscapes of modern movie culture. All of this happened behind closed doors, the backlot shut off from the public in a veil of secrecy and movie magic. M-G-M: Hollywoods Greatest Backlot highlights this fascinating film treasure by recounting the history, popularity, and success of the MGM company through a tour of its physical property. Featuring the candid, exclusive voices and photographs from the people who worked there, and including hundreds of rare and unpublished photographs (including many from the archives of Warner Bros.), readers are launched aboard a fun and entertaining virtual tour of Hollywoods most famous and mysterious motion picture studio.

From Publishers Weekly "The world probably will not see anything quite like it again," concedes talk show host Dick Cavett about the Culver City home to some of the 20th century's most renowned and respected actors, actresses, screenwriters, and artists. A production company in its truest sense, the eventual 1924 merger of Metro, Goldwyn, and Mayer pioneered an assembly-line approach to filmmaking and initial profits paved the way for the introduction of sound stages and innovations in set design, special effects, and many other aspects of film production. Chapters are sub-divided into "Lots" as was the MGM site itself and readers are transported into a bygone era through candid bw photographs, lucid commentaries, testimonials, and anecdotes that bestow a behind-the-scenes experience. But the tale had a darker side as well: cracks were showing in the pristine veneer and the editors aptly include the studio's undignified demise amidst squandered assets and disillusioned takeover attempts. Film-buffs, historians, sociologists, and economists will swoon at the intricacy and insider information here; detailed balance sheets of frequently over-blown production budgets are even included. Readers will be educated, inspired, and enthralled by this handsome book. Photos. (Feb.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. "Reading this was like being there. I know. I was there." Clint Eastwood "The first ten films I made for MGM changed my life. Now you can go back in time as I have in the pages of this remarkable book, learning how and where the Land of Make Believe became real. Once you take the journey, you, too, will be transported." Angela Lansbury "What a cornucopia of valuable behind-the-scenes

information and rare photos. I've got one word to describe this book: Irresistible!" Leonard Maltin "For anyone who has ever dreamed what it was like to live in the Golden Age of Hollywood, this visit to my grandfathers studio will vividly re-create the experience." Daniel Mayer Selznick "This comprehensive history uses detailed text and a wealth of behind the scenes photos to take you through the most storied of major studio lots. If you love classic Hollywood, this book is a knockout." Kenneth Turan "I was under contract with MGM for six years and twenty four films, and seeing this extraordinary new book of photos and commentary took me, and will take you, on a journey where Louis B. Mayers More Stars Than There Are in Heaven acted on the magnificent grounds and sets of MGMs five backlots." Richard Anderson "What an achievement! Having spent a great deal of time on the backlot myself, this book brought forth so many memories. The description of the last days of MGM is brilliantly done, and the list of films shot on the various sets is incredible. All in all, its a spectacular project!" Kevin Brownlow About the Author Steven Bingen is the author of Warner Bros.: The Stuff That Dreams Are Made Of and has contributed to numerous books, documentaries, and magazines. He holds a staff position at Warner Bros. Corporate Archive, aiding in the preservation and management of the studios legend and legacy. Stephen X. Sylvester is a filmmaker and historian who was lucky enough to have explored MGMs legendary backlots in 1968 and 1975. Michael Troyan is the author of A Rose for Mrs. Miniver: The Life of Greer Garson and has contributed to Disney AZ, The Disney Villains, and The Disney Poster Book.