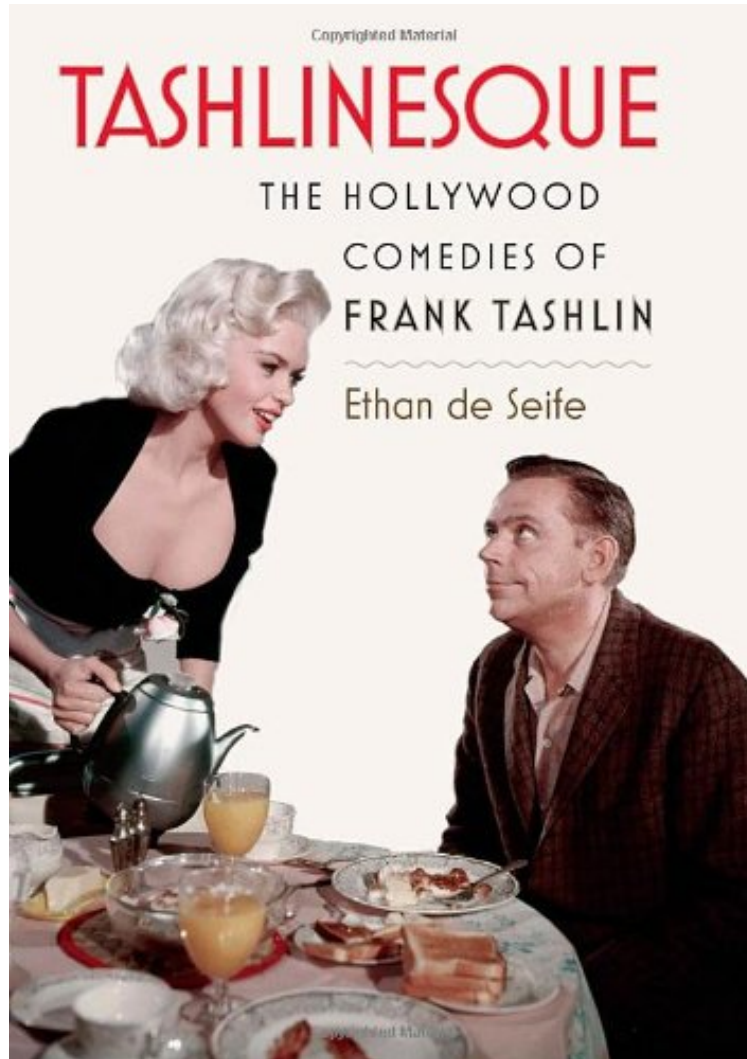


[Free] Tashlinesque: The Hollywood Comedies of Frank Tashlin

## Tashlinesque: The Hollywood Comedies of Frank Tashlin

*Ethan de Seife*

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**Ethan de Seife : Tashlinesque: The Hollywood Comedies of Frank Tashlin** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Tashlinesque: The Hollywood Comedies of Frank Tashlin:

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. At last....a book about one of Hollywood's finest directors!By richard koperGreat book about one of my favorite Holywood directors; Frank Tashlin.Well written and researched, this book is a must if you love Tashlin and if you're a fan of 1950's Hollywood.I've just published a book about Tashlin's fities muse: Jayne Mansfield ("Affectionately, Jayne Mansfield" available at The BearManor Media).Buy it!!5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Excellent analysis of a great comedy masterBy Joanne E. SprottYou've heard of his movies, especially if you're over fifty, but you've likely not heard of Frank Tashlin by name.

His comedy work as animator, screenwriter, director and producer is legendary, but he often worked on teams or with folks like Jerry Lewis who had more visible names. But if you ask Lewis, he'll tell you how Tashlin influenced his own work as he moved from simply acting to creating his own comedies. With titles like *The Girl Can't Help It* with Jayne Mansfield, *The Disorderly Orderly* and more with Jerry Lewis, and a goofy handful of Bob Hope comedies as well, Tashlin's portfolio is quite impressive. Tashlin cut his comedy teeth over at Warner Bros. on *Porky Pig*, and took that animated comedy controlled chaos perspective to the live action movies from there. Clever, satirical, sexy, pushing the old censorship envelope as hard as he could, Tashlin helped define the comedies of the 1950s and early 1960s. Ethan de Seife has put together an outstanding journey through Tashlin's work, and most importantly, highlighted all his contributions to the art of comedy, from sight gags and sexual humor to diegetic rupture and gag/narrative integration. For those of us watching the movies, these techniques are invisible, but they make the pace and pattern that creates what's funny. I'll never be able to see a Tashlinesque comedy again without a much deeper appreciation for the talent that goes into making comedy work. This book is almost as much fun as the movies; it was so great to be able to work the index on this one and get a few laughs at the same time. :D6 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Fine Survey of Tashlin's Live-Action, Abysmal on His Animation By Thad Komorowski

A book on the subject of American filmmaker Frank Tashlin has been vitally needed for decades now, and Ethan de Seife has filled that void - somewhat. I'm doubtful he'll achieve his goal of making Tashlin a more embracing subject. While I have noticed a resurgence of interest in his animated cartoons for Warner Bros. thanks to the vast majority of them being included on recent DVD compilations (so much so that fans are ranking them on the same level or even higher than esteemed "gods" like Bob Clampett and Chuck Jones), his live-action films are scattershot across so many distributors (and movie stars) to ensure a beneficial home video retrospective. The unjust 'blemish' on the director's reputation in the guise of Jerry Lewis is also simply too strong. Unfortunately, the first 70 pages or so of "Tashlinesque", devoted to Tashlin's animation career and how it compares/contrasts with his live-action films, are almost a complete waste of time. In trying to dispel the myth that Tashlin did "live-action as cartoons" and "cartoons as live-action" and prove that they are really one singular body of work with the same driving ideology, De Seife reveals that he has absolutely no proficiency in dissecting what makes the animated cartoon tick. The irony is that I completely agree with de Seife's underlying sentiment, but he goes out of his way to dissect Tashlin's Warner cartoons in the most boring terms (many paragraphs devoted to average shot lengths and percentages). For some reason, Tashlin's handling of *Bugs Bunny* is deemed unworthy of commentary. His time at Disney's, and how he was not utilized, is not discussed. Surely one will have to admit that there are distinct differences between the making of an animated cartoon and a live-action movie, specifically when it comes to the filmmaker's art/drawing style, and how he or she uses it to its fullest potential. De Seife doesn't even attempt to analyze how Tashlin's background as a print cartoonist greatly impacted his animated cartoons, an absolute necessity in establishing why Tashlin was such a unique, singular talent. Of the big Hollywood cartoon directors, Tex Avery, Bob Clampett, and Chuck Jones have been done justice on the printed page, but Tashlin remains woefully neglected (as has Friz Freleng). De Seife does nothing to rectify this. Once de Seife gets into Tashlin's live-action career in the 1950s, the book gets considerably better. The most interesting passages are when we get a taste of how Tashlin got so much lurid material past the Production Code Administration (in short: he acknowledged that the censors wanted changes and responded by simply not making the changes). It's a wonderfully refreshing change from the endless horror stories that plague many film histories about how the Code brought down so many great ideas. Here we see a genius writer-director putting one after another over on the censors, by putting racier dialog in the middle of a long, single shot and retorting, "It'd be too expensive to reshoot it." The Production Code was losing its teeth in the 1950s and became practically nonexistent in the 1960s. Almost cynically, this is when Tashlin's comedies began to lose their edge. Many times, writers go out of their way to not acknowledge that a director's work got considerably weaker later (see many essays/books on Alfred Hitchcock or Billy Wilder). Fortunately, de Seife doesn't do that, and goes into splendid detail about Tashlin's undeniable decline in the 1960s, bringing up the crucial point that he may have been negatively affected by collaborating with Jerry Lewis. De Seife did a commendable job examining the live-action career of Tashlin, but you would be better off watching the Tashlin cartoons yourself and drawing your own conclusions. A primer to a true history of Frank Tashlin, no doubt, but whether one will be written at this point remains unlikely.

Frank Tashlin (1913-1972) was a supremely gifted satirist and visual stylist who made an indelible mark on 1950s Hollywood and American popular culture first as a talented animator working on Looney Tunes cartoons, then as muse to film stars Jerry Lewis, Bob Hope, and Jayne Mansfield. Yet his name is not especially well known today. Long regarded as an anomaly or curiosity, Tashlin is finally given his due in this career-spanning survey. Tashlinesque considers the director's films in the contexts of Hollywood censorship, animation history, and the development of the genre of comedy in American film, with particular emphasis on the sex, satire, and visual flair that comprised Tashlin's distinctive artistic and comedic style. Through close readings and pointed analyses of Tashlin's large and fascinating body of work, Ethan de Seife offers fresh insights into such classic films as *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?*, *The Girl Can't Help It*, *Artists and Models*, *The Disorderly Orderly*, and *Son of Paleface*, as well as numerous Warner Bros.

cartoons starring Porky Pig, among others. This is an important rediscovery of a highly unusual and truly hilarious American artist. Includes a complete filmography.

Tashlin was such a master of comedy in both animated shorts and live-action features that one is tempted to wish equally that he had never abandoned animation for the live-action features, and that he had started his live-action career sooner without getting sidetracked into animated cartoons. But his live-action directing included the same zany fantasy that made his animation so funny, and was so surreal that it remains unique after fifty years of live-action movies. Tashlin has been the subject of numerous studies in France since 1958, but *Tashlinesque* is the first American book devoted to his work. Fred Patten, Animation World Network (web)