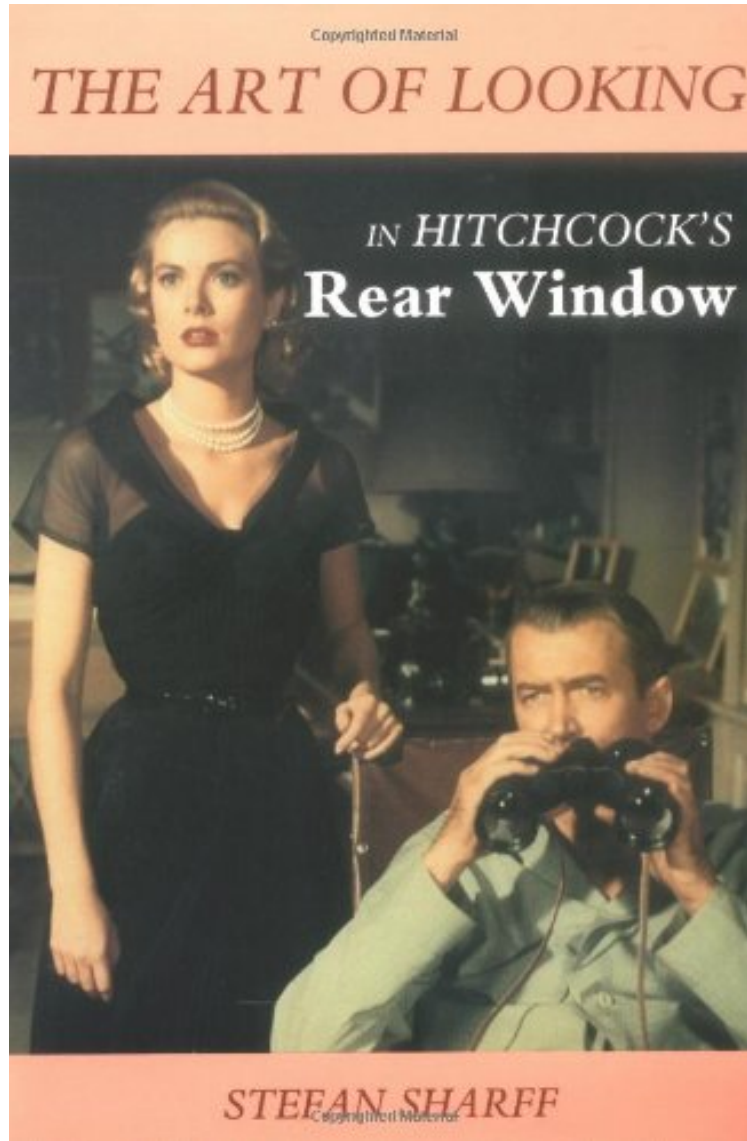


The Art of Looking in Hitchcock's Rear Window

Stefan Sharff

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Stefan Sharff : The Art of Looking in Hitchcock's Rear Window before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Art of Looking in Hitchcock's Rear Window:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Know What You Are Buying By J. Thomas Sharff's The Art of Looking attempts to take the reader on a journey akin to one of his classroom experiences. That is, Sharff attempts to relate how a director orchestrates the construction of a film. What the book is: This book begins with an essay on the form- that is, a discussion on the grammar of cinema and how Hitchcock uses these special tools of communication

and meaning. In essence, Sharif argues for a purely Hitchcockian cinematic vernacular. The book then goes on to relay a synopsis of the film's story in short order. However, the real focus of the book is to break down the filmic structure of *Rear Window* into its parts so as to discover, and then analyze, how the film works through its mise-en-scene and montage. Sharff takes us on a virtual shot-by-shot tour of the film, describing how he understands Hitchcock to be operating. After this lengthy portion of the book, there follows a shot list with shot descriptions and dialogue. And this is where some reviewers take issue... As some other reviewers have stated, the book states on page 104 that the "complete dialogue from the film" is represented within the text. Well, this is not true. What is used is the final shooting script, word-for-word, from December 1, 1953. The back of the book states it uses the "continuity" text, which is a shooting script. Further, the description as of the writing of my review states the "shooting script" is the base-text. Thus, there is no transcription of the film's final, edited dialogue to be found in this book. (Nor in any book) I can understand how this may be the source of annoyance to some; however, the misstatement does not in any way detract from what the book strives to be or, indeed exists as: an exercise in decoding Hitchcock's vernacular. So, please do buy the book if this is what you are looking for. If reading slightly academic text is boring to you, look elsewhere. If you are looking for a "making-of" book, that as of yet does not exist for this film. Sharff's is a book better suited for students of film studies as well as Hitchcock devotees. I consider it a must-have book.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Deeply-Flawed Volume -- But Still Fun For Fans Of The Film By David Von Pein "The Art Of Looking In Hitchcock's *Rear Window*" is a 196-page volume written by Stefan Sharff in 1997. For mega-fans of Alfred Hitchcock's much-heralded 1954 classic suspense movie, "*Rear Window*", this book can provide a fun way to pass some time. This is very literally a "Movie in a book", with the emphasis on painstaking detail of every scene contained within the engrossing Hitchcock 115-minute flick. Well, maybe I should have stopped short (above) of using the word "painstaking" to describe this volume. Because Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines "painstaking" as -- "diligent care and effort". While Sharff's work here might well be termed as "painstaking"; I'd also have to add that it's not painstaking enough! I say this mainly due to the mountain of errors I found while perusing Chapter 4, entitled "Shot By Shot (With Timing And Dialogue)". This lengthy chapter of more than 70 pages purports to "provide the complete dialogue as heard in the film" (exact quote from the book). However, any die-hard fan of "*Rear Window*" (who has seen the film multiple times) will instantly recognize this "complete dialogue" claim to be vastly overstated. There are HUGE chunks of dialogue missing from this "Shot-By-Shot" portion of the book. And an even greater number of misquotes from the film. I couldn't believe how much stuff was omitted here. On very nearly every page during this supposedly verbatim text reference to every scene in the film I kept saying to myself -- "Nope. That's not exactly right either!" Or, on many other occasions, "Why has this line by Jefferies (or by Lisa Fremont) been left out here?" One such blatant example of ignored dialogue occurs on page 123 of the book (during the description of an early scene between L.B. Jefferies (played by James Stewart) and Lisa Fremont (Grace Kelly). After Lisa says "I don't care what you do for a living; I'd just like to be part of it somehow", the book just decides to cut out the next few lines for no apparent reason (which, as I mentioned, happens way too often during the course of this publication). According to Sharff's text, the next line to be heard in the film (after the line spoken by Lisa that I just wrote above) is Jefferies saying: "Wait a minute" (a line which isn't in the movie AT ALL!). What *should* have followed is a little more give-and-take between Lisa and "Jeff" at the end of this very good and well-done scene (a scene which has a poignant and bittersweet flavor to it). Lisa's next line is: "It's deflating to find out the only way I can be part of it is to take out a subscription to your magazine. I guess I'm not the girl I thought I was." Jeff then comes back with: "Now, there's nothing wrong with you Lisa. You've got this town in the palm of your hand." To which Lisa responds: "Not quite it seems." All of these lines I've mentioned are totally missing from this book's "Shot-By-Shot" chapter. Ridiculous! To leave out a word or two here or there is certainly understandable in a work like this one, where an entire movie script is being re-played in print form. But here, enormous hunks of important lines are cut out, willy-nilly! Lisa's "magazine subscription" line, in fact, is a very clever line in the movie, both funny and sad at the same time. It's one of my favorite lines in this film. To omit it (and many others that follow) displays just plain carelessness and negligence on the part of the author, in my opinion. For, how difficult is it to get the lines correct for a publication like this? Just watch the movie beginning to end, and write down every word spoken. But this obviously wasn't done in this case. Curious. Most curious indeed. Now, even though I frown at all the sloppy omissions and errors that prevail in this volume, it *is* still a fun book to browse through (for the many pictures if nothing else). A lot of the photos in the book are of subpar quality, being taken (I think) directly from a VHS video source, which doesn't really flatter the material (kind of blurry and non-detailed). There are, however, many excellent-quality photographs contained on these pages. The crystal-clear pics are (I think) mostly publicity stills. A few of these production photos (plus a bunch more) can also be found among the Special Features on the superlative "*Rear Window*" Collector's Edition DVD, produced by Universal Home Video. Despite my negative comments above, I still like having this book in my collection (mainly because I enjoy behind-the-scenes stuff involving films directed by "The Master", Alfred Hitchcock). If you pick up this item of bound printed matter, just don't expect it to be anywhere near comprehensive or complete in terms of a "word-for-word" account of the motion picture. Because it's far from earning that distinction. David Von Pein

May 2004 8 of 10 people found the following review helpful. READ THIS REVIEW FIRST BEFORE PURCHASE!!!! By

A CustomerOkay. So you're thinking about buying this book. Maybe you should, maybe you shouldn't. However, what you really shouldn't do is base that decision on the number of stars it has or any of the stupid reviews found (most likely underneath mine). "Why?" do you ask. Pretty much because the reviews are all biased and not well thought out. I'm a filmmaker and appreciate a book like this in its truly in depth, detailed analysis of a great filmmaker's work - this being Rear Window. It's an analysis of the script and then a shot by shot analysis of the film, including images of the shots to help you visualize. If you are interested in this sort of thing, then buy this book. Anyone fascinated by the art of the cinema can agree that it can be imperative in really discussing the use of camera by a director, particularly by Hitchcock, who was a master of such craft. It's one of the few books I can find that break the film down in this regard so well and with such conviction/detail. It's a truly great reference to find. ***Okay, now listen up. If you do decide to read any other reviews (mostly the stupid ones with only one star) then note how the writer of each review states that what they wanted was something about the making of the film or production itself. They didn't find that from the book b/c that's not what it's about, so they gave it a bad review. That's just dumb and ignorant. If they wanted that, then why did they buy the book in the first place. Sorry, this just makes me angry. You can't rate a book by what you thought you were getting, especially when the book backing says nothing about any sort of 'making of'. So, if this IS what you are looking for, then, fine - do yourself a favor - and buy a different book on the subject. If you want a book like the one I mentioned earlier, then stop reading this and purchase. Thank you.

(Limelight). A detailed overview of Hitchcock's skill in developing the story from intriguing start to shattering climax. A shot-by-shot analysis, using the shooting script as text, describes how Hitchcock's technique accomplished its magic.

.com Readers who agree with Stefan Sharff that "the voyeuristic drive is an unavoidable part of watching a film," will find much food for thought in this book. Sharff contends that the hero of Rear Window, played by James Stewart, is himself a voyeur, and that through him Hitchcock replicates and satirizes the experience of movie watching itself. The author further argues that Hitchcock uses a cinematic "high vernacular" to convey his complex ideas. As he reveals the relationship between the film's visual style and meaning, its form and its content, Sharff walks through it no fewer than three times. In the chapters that make up the heart of this book, he summarizes the movie's plot, then comments on each of its shots in succession, and finally provides a sequential shot list for easy reference. The result is one of the most meticulous analyses of a single film available in print. It should hold a special interest for Hitchcock fans who own Rear Window on video--putting the film in the "pause" mode as they read along with Sharff will give them the opportunity to follow, absorb, and argue with the analyses of a famous film critic and Hitchcock fan. --Raphael Shargel