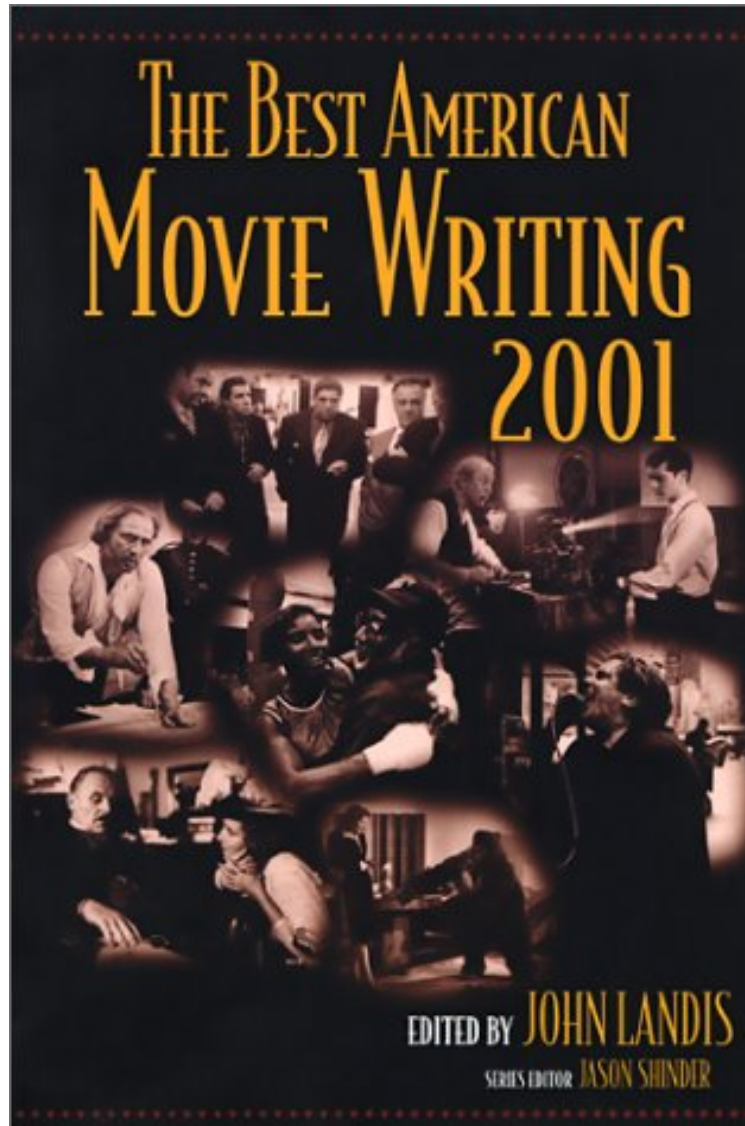


The Best American Movie Writing 2001

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From Brand: Thunder's Mouth Press : The Best American Movie Writing 2001 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Best American Movie Writing 2001:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful collection of profound essays on film. By Bill Kline Excellent!

The Best Movie Writing 2001 is dedicated to collecting the best writing about our most influential medium, our most popular, evocative and hotly debated art and mode of storytelling, and includes several new features: introductions of

each piece by the guest editor; comments by the contributors on their pieces: and a catalog of America's most important movie magazines. Discussions are not limited to individual films, actors and directors but range from the racial politics of *Gone With the Wind* to the protest surrounding the 1999 adaptation of the book *American Psycho*; from how the MPAA rates independent films, to the battle between proponents of film and the new digital technology. Includes selections from Ian Buruma, Molly Haskell, Michael Herr, John Irving, Lawrence Kasdan, Jack Kerouac, Stuart Klawans, Stanley Kubric, and others.

From *Publishers Weekly* "The next best thing to watching movies is perhaps to read about them," series editor Jason Shinder writes in his preface, and the 27 selections (culled from magazines, newspapers, journals and books) chosen by guest editor and film director Landis (*Animal House*) are a fine mixture of intelligence, fun, pathos and wit. Arranged in general, if at times quirky, categories like "actors," "censorship," "writers," "Nazis" and "genre," these pieces do not cover practical issues in filmmaking as much as provide an overview of the field's intellectual state. Bob Burns's memoir of Charles Gemora, who played the gorilla in many 1940s and '50s Hollywood movies, is a touching tribute and meditation on the magic of movie special effects before technology took over. "People Who Need People," by David Geffner, details film documentaries about real people's sex lives, questioning the false boundaries we make between art and life. And J. Hoberman's "When the Nazis Became Nudniks" questions whether Mel Brooks's *The Producers* is a product of Jewish anti-Semitism. Many of the essays are political, and generally have a progressive, edgy tone. Two great treasures are a contemplation of Moe, Larry and Curly by Jack Kerouac and a short piece by the late Stanley Kubrick on audiences' reactions to *2001* after it was trashed by critics. While reading about is never the same as watching a film (Landis notes that writing about film is "rather like using words to explain the experience of sex"), these essays still satisfy and excite. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* Movies have been hailed as the liveliest art, and writing about films should be equally lively, perceptive, and, at best, grounded in a thorough understanding of film history. Compiled by guest editor and veteran director Landis (*Animal House*), this collection gets off to a peculiar start with a negative quotation sampler, "Thoughts on Critics." Perhaps as a reaction to the blandness of Hollywood's current product, many of the pieces featured here look at Hollywood's past rather than reflecting on its present. Some of the writing isn't exactly new, either. Stanley Kubrick's reflections on his *2001: A Space Odyssey* remain interesting, but Jack Kerouac's riff on the Three Stooges reveals far more about Kerouac than the Stooges. Other essays on vintage films include a look at the "racial politics" of *Gone with the Wind*, the inflammatory politics of Gillo Pontecorvo's *Burn!*, and the screwball, fast-talking sexual equality of *His Girl Friday*. John Bailey's essay on the film vs. video debate is current and provocative, but only a few pieces, like an appraisal of MPAA ratings of independent films, seem truly relevant. Not surprisingly, some essays by screenwriters come off best. Overall, this very lumpy offering is not necessary for most film collections. Stephen Rees, Levittown Regional Lib., PA Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist* In his selection of the year's ostensibly best writing about movies, editor Landis, director of such hits as *Animal House* and *The Blues Brothers*, reflects the character of his work. These pieces are eclectic, entertaining, and not particularly deep. Highlights among them include a grim account of starlet Barbara Payton's descent into alcoholism and prostitution; a profile of makeup artist turned actor Charles Gemora, who specialized in playing gorillas; thoughts by Russell Banks and John Irving on adapting novels into films; and a memoir by blacklisted screenwriter Walter Bernstein. The entire section on censorship, including an expose of the inequities of the G-through-X ratings system, is exceptional. Unfortunately, to Landis' best American movie writing fails to encompass serious, illuminating criticism--even so insightful a critic as Jonathan Rosenbaum is represented by a lightweight, for him, piece on *The Producers*--and designates Americans writing about American movies only: foreign films are pretty much ignored. Still, Landis' choices may appeal to more readers than would the kind of selections that cineasts might approve. Gordon Flagg Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved