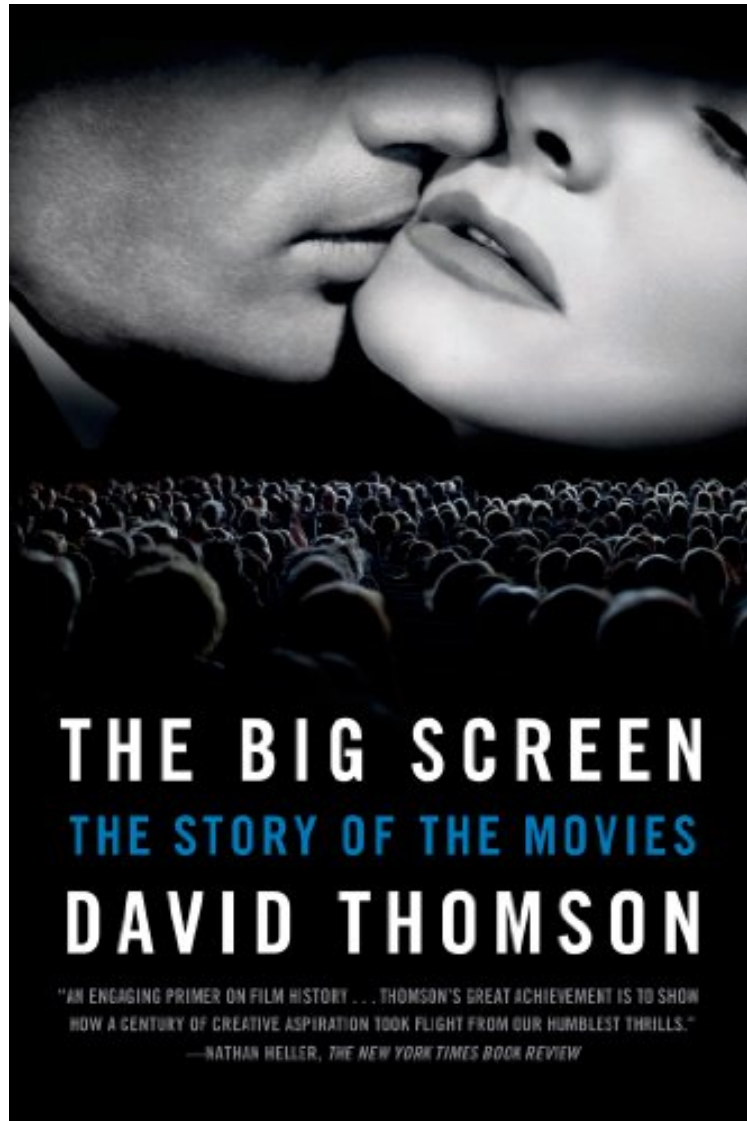


(Download pdf ebook) The Big Screen: The Story of the Movies

## The Big Screen: The Story of the Movies

David Thomson

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**David Thomson : The Big Screen: The Story of the Movies** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Big Screen: The Story of the Movies:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Maybe a book for more of a specialist By Robert Slocum Oh my goodness what a lot of movies (and television). I knew about DW Griffiths. I've seen M and TRIUMPH OF WILL. The first hundred pages went along swimmingly for me. Then I pretty much skipped the next hundred as Thomson takes us into 1930s Hollywood and French and English films I never heard of. I'm sure I skimmed another hundred

pages out of the remaining three hundred. I go to fewer movies than average, I suppose. If you were only half-literate in Edouard Manet, say, you could be swept along on a book about him with the help of some reproductions of his paintings, but not so much in a book about movies. Sometimes you get a few pages about one film. TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT. But nothing about the story of Hawks and Hemingway agreeing that Hawks would do a film on Hemingway's (self-chosen) WORST novel. Or maybe Hawks chose it. Casablanca, Godfather, Chinatown, Spielberg, Lucas. I LOVE LUCY. These and others also get more than drive-by treatment. Thomson writes some wonderful passages. For example, he has a few great paragraphs about whether violence in the movies has any responsibility for violence in the culture. He's a philosopher of the meaning of the viewer in the dark, the screen. He makes some great observations about Ronald Reagan and politics. (FYI he calls Reagan a bit player, but the guy had the first million dollar contract, according to a book I read about his screen career. This was before the war. His best performance--I don't mean being president!--is in KING'S ROW. Worth checking out.) Anyway a mixed bag, and an unusual experience to be skimming over prose that is just fine except you haven't got the reference point. The Wall Street Journal had a review of this book that tempted me. I'm not sure you can call this a book for a general audience. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. One of the best critical histories of the motion picture arts By Alan C Duncan The BIG SCREEN is one of the best critical histories of the motion picture arts I have read. Mr. Thomson loves his subject, but he is not in love with it. This is a history with warts and all. His concept includes all the visual arts from Eadweard Muybridge and the birth of photography to the iPhone. If it can be projected or viewed on a screen, it's in this book. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Good but disjointed By Roger Brooks Interesting, but a hodgepodge not quite chronological and not by theme. Best considered as a collection of essays.

The definitive story of the medium that defines our times The Big Screen tells the enthralling story of the movies: their rise and spread, their remarkable influence over us, and the technology that made the screen as important as the images it carries. But The Big Screen is not another history of the movies. Rather, it is a wide-ranging narrative about the movies and their signal role in modern life. The celebrated film authority David Thomson takes us around the globe, through time, and across many media to tell the complex, gripping, paradoxical story of the movies. He tracks the ways we were initially enchanted by movies as imitations of life—the stories, the stars, the look—and how we allowed them to show us how to live. At the same time, movies, offering a seductive escape from everyday reality and its responsibilities, have made it possible for us to evade life altogether. The entranced audience has become a model for powerless and anxiety-ridden citizens trying to pursue happiness and dodge terror by sitting quietly in a dark room. Does the big screen take us out into the world or merely mesmerize us? That is Thomson's question in this grand adventure of a book, vital to anyone trying to make sense of the age of screen—the age that, more than ever, we are living in.

From Booklist \*Starred\* Veteran essayist Thomson's thoughtful new book is not just the story of traditional cinema; the screen of the title refers not only to the silver screen of the movies, but also to television and beyond. Early on, he draws a fascinating parallel between the viewing experience of Edison's nickelodeon, a single person watching a short film loop through a viewfinder, to the way we now watch YouTube-length clips on our computer screens, whether tablet- or smartphone-size. But does the vacuum of watching alone merely stimulate our proclivity for fantasy and illusion? How has 100 years of watching movies affected our ability to handle realities outside the screen? Every page is studded with provocative questions meant to goad readers into rethinking common assumptions. For much of the book, he co-opts the approach of his earlier tome, *The New Biographical Dictionary of Film* (2010), sketching thumbnail portraits of dozens of historical figures: Eadweard Muybridge, John Ford, Ingrid Bergman, Akira Kurosawa, Lucille Ball, George Lucas, Quentin Tarantino, and others. The way he strings these cameos together thematically rather than chronologically will prove maddening to anyone wanting a straightforward history. But if the most important quality of a book about the movies is that it triggers a craving to reexamine the movies themselves, then Thomson's book is a spectacular success. --Rob Christopher From Bookforum This is Thomson at his best: holding his jewels, singly, to the light and finding unglimped facets. If you haven't seen, say, *Boudu Saved from Drowning* or *A Man Escaped* or *Hiroshima mon amour* or *Sunrise* or *Metropolis*, *The Big Screen* will make you want to. And even if you've seen them, you may want to go back, because a movie is no longer quite the same once it's been viewed through Thomson's exacting lens. It is, in fact, this fine analytical grain, coupled with Thomson's penchant for eccentric judgments and rhetorical excess, that make him so ill suited to the historical-survey format of *The Big Screen*. The obligations of chronology force him into bizarre conjunctions, yoking noir to the musical and Max Ophüls to Robert Bresson. Louis Bayard David Thomson is, I think, the best writer on film in our time. If *Have You Seen . . . ?* was his most succinct and entertaining book, *The Big Screen* is a large and vivacious map of the screen: beginning with Muybridge and tracing careers ranging from Korda to Renoir to Hawkes to Mizoguchi, to David Lynch and Tarantino, then swerving over to television shows such as *I Love Lucy* and *The Sopranos*. Thomson has found and created a marvelous plot for the history of film, with insights and revelations on every page--as well as a few MacGuffins. He is

our most argumentative and trustworthy historian of the screen. Michael Ondaatje, author of *The Englishman's Boy*David Thomson has composed a grand aesthetic, spiritual, and moral account of cinema history assembled around the movies and artists that have meant the most to him. As Thomson reconstructs film history, movies bring us close to reality and deliver us into ecstatic dreams. A pungently written, brilliant book. David Denby, author of *Snark* and film critic at *The New Yorker*A great critic cuts both ways--he nudges you into reconsidering the films you love, as well as the ones you dislike. David Thomson's sensual prose has always amplified the imagination of a great critic. In broad outline, *The Big Screen* is a history of the movies, a wide-ranging task that usually carries with it a certain amount of connect-the-dots tedium. But Thomson's emphases are typically fresh and often ecstatic, even when he's disparaging a film you love. Nobody does it better. Scott Eyman, author of *Empire of Dreams* and *Lion of Hollywood*