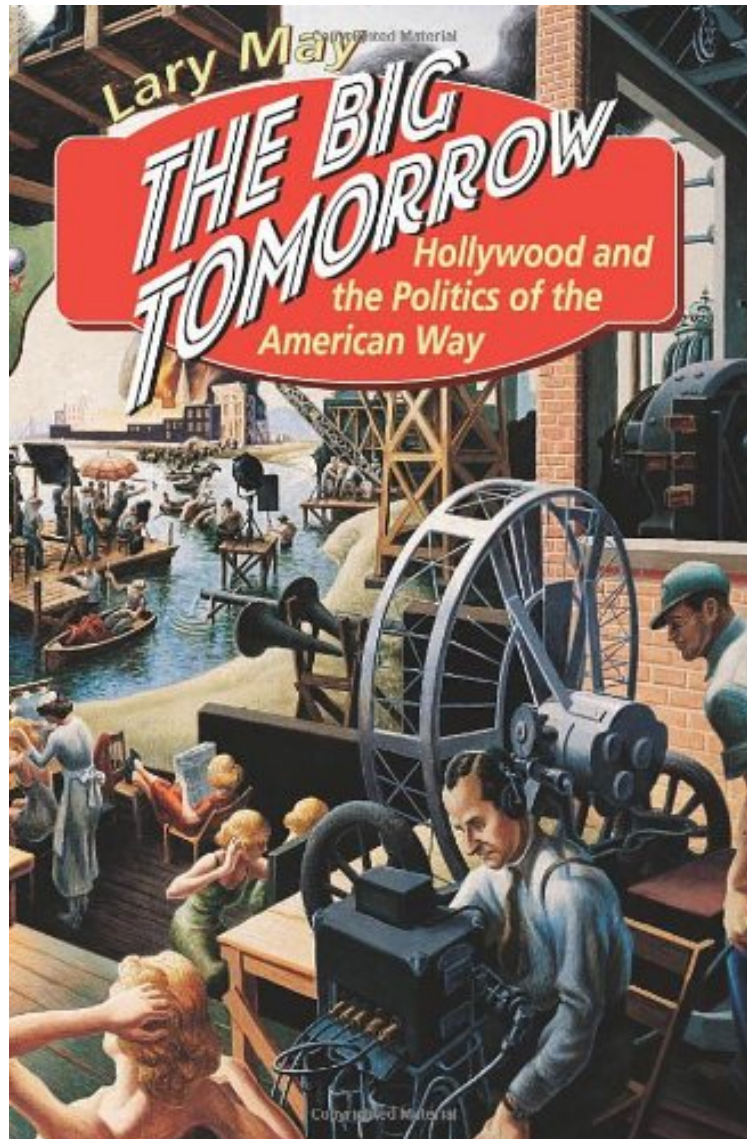


(Free and download) The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way

The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way

Lary May

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#927409 in Books Lary May 2002-12-15 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.00 x 1.10 x 6.00l, 1.31 #File Name: 0226511634364 pages The Big Tomorrow Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way | File size: 43.Mb

Lary May : The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating look at American film and politics By Jeff If you're at all

interested in movies or popular culture in the US 20th century, this book really is a must read. It tells the story of how the movie industry moved from a tone of egalitarianism in the 1920's and early 1930's to a very regimented and prepackaged style which downplayed the roles of the poor and minorities. Interrupted by WWII, this regimentation was extended into the 1950's as Ronald Reagan became head of the Screen Actors Guild and the film industry fell victim to the Red Scare and censorship. The above might sound like standard leftist cant, but it is well documented by analysis of lots of primary source material some of which is shown in lengthy appendices. The reader is left with a strong sense that Lary May has really uncovered something here worth of wide discussion. May is a gifted academic observer of the movies. His prior book on the rise of the studios and how theatres themselves changed in the 1930's is a great read. However, I thought this book took his analysis to a whole new level. Again, if you are interested in American popular culture, or American movies, this book is a must read.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By John W. Price
Great item, thanks!
10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. One of the finest film studies of recent years
By Robert Moore
This is one of those books that is difficult to over praise. Over and over while reading this book, May helped me gain new insight into aspects of Hollywood cinema from the thirties, forties, and fifties, and continually suggested to me new areas of research to undertake. In the long run, I believe that his book is going to have a profound effect on the way that I view movies from those decades. Before I move on to the considerable praise I want to heap on this book, let me dwell briefly on a couple of negatives. I think this book has a much broader appeal than the author might believe. The book takes an essentially popular subject, and couches it in an overly academic style. As someone with a strong graduate school background (albeit in philosophy rather than cultural studies), I managed to always make sense of his argument, but sometimes only with difficulty. There was also a too-heavy reliance on statistical data for my taste. Clearly he feels that the data gives greater force to and to a degree validates many of his arguments. But I feel that it also caused the book to drag at points. But overall, this book is a stunner. The thesis of the book is a complex one, and any attempt to state it briefly will distort it to a degree. I will try to minimize my distortion. May begins by arguing that there was a radical shift in social and political outlook in Hollywood in the 1940s. The effort in Hollywood to eliminate political dissent and to promulgate a monolithic vision of America is well known. May argues that this was a break with the legacy of the thirties, in which the Hollywood talking film had developed as a mode of expressing an egalitarian, anticapitalist, and multicultural affirmation of the New Deal. Thirties films were highly critical of big business, with representatives of big business frequently appearing as villains in films. As America entered WW II, however, and began to unify in order to oppose first Hitler and Japan and then the Red Menace, movies reflected a different order, which was nonegalitarian, pro-big business (with big business disappearing as a villain in films), and nondissenting. May attempts to tell this story in several ways. His brilliant first chapter dwells at length on the movie career of Will Rogers, who articulated a vision of America that varied greatly from the Anglo-Saxon dream that looked to Europe for models of success and social ordering. As May quotes on several occasions, in response to the New England social elite, Rogers, who identified with his Cherokee heritage, wrote, "My ancestors didn't come over on the Mayflower--they met the boat." The second chapter of the book continues this to display many example of multicultural republicanism that permeated 1930s filmmaking. He then proceeds, in perhaps my favorite chapter in the book, to demonstrate how this egalitarian vision of America profoundly influenced American movie theater design. Rejecting the theater palaces that dominated 1920s theater design and which represented an affirmation of the social layering of the European model--with different prices of admission for various areas and separate entrances--American designers moved to a conception where all viewers paid a uniform price and seating was not restricted, with all viewers entering through the same entrance. The second half of the book deals with the undermining of the egalitarianism of the thirties by a new vision of Americanism in the forties. The first of two chapters devoted to this displays this by articulating the vision of a white consumer culture, where individuals look for freedom in a private realm emphasizing family and material comfort. The second chapter deals with the politics in Hollywood to help eliminate all those who dissented from this vision or who had a political history that did not conform to this vision. These were painful chapters to read, with the ruthless suppression of political dissent. May deals in some degree with the history of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), which in the 1930s strongly affirmed the ideals of the New Deal and egalitarian ideals. In particular, the career of the first appointed president of the SAG (in the 1930s, the president of the SAG was elected by the membership), Ronald Reagan (i.e., he was not elected by the membership at all) is dealt with at length. May ends his book with a discussion of film noir and its attempt to express dissent from the accepted and sanctioned cultural norm. Anyone interested in cultural studies, the political climate and culture of the US in the thirties and forties, or the history of Hollywood should read this book. Easily one of the more compelling books I have read on film in the past two or three years.

In this daring reexamination of the connections between national politics and Hollywood movies, Lary May offers a fresh interpretation of American culture from the New Deal through the Cold War one in which a populist, egalitarian ethos found itself eventually supplanted by a far different view of the nation. "One of the best books ever written about the movies." Tom Ryan, *The Age* "The most exhilarating work of revisionist film history since Pauline Kael's *Citizen Kane*. . . . May's take on what movies once were (energizing, as opposed to enervating), and hence can become again,

is enough to get you believing in them again as one of the regenerative forces America so sorely needs." Jay Carr, Boston Globe "A startling, revisionist history of Hollywood's impact on politics and American culture. . . . A convincing and important addition to American cultural criticism." Publishers Weekly "A controversial overview of 30 years of American film history; must reading for any serious student of the subject." Choice "A provocative social history of Hollywood's influence in American life from the 1930s to the 1950s. May argues persuasively that movies in the period offered a good deal of tough criticism of economic and social conditions in U.S. society. . . . May challenges us to engage in some serious rethinking about Hollywood's impact on American society in the middle of the twentieth century." Robert Brent Toplin, American Historical Review

From Publishers Weekly In mapping out his bold vision of how Hollywood movies of the 1930s, particularly comedies and musicals, were not mindless escapes from the Depression, but promoted egalitarian visions of democracy, May presents a startling, revisionist history of Hollywood's impact on politics and American culture. A professor of American studies at the University of Minnesota, he explores such questions as whether FDR or Will Rogers was a more influential proponent of the New Deal; how Stepin Fetchit, whose very name has become synonymous with Hollywood racism, helped the status of blacks in the motion picture industry; and how Bob Hope and Bing Crosby's road movies helped move U.S. culture from the progressive ideals of the 1930s to the consumer culture of the 1950s. Prodigious research, his study is filled with revealing details--how Rita Hayworth was made literally whiter as she progressed from being a character actor to a star; how Warner Oland's portrayal of Charlie Chan resisted preexisting stereotypes of Asians in Hollywood films; how silent films promoted an idea of an all-white America; and how the introduction of sound allowed the immigrant experience to be more fully represented. May's perceptive readings of a wide range of materials--film scripts, union documents, newspaper reports, movie palace floor plans and war reportage--make for a convincing and important addition to American cultural criticism. (June) Copyright 2000 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal With its steady flow of gaudy musicals, idealized views of small-town American life, and "Capra-corn" fare like Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, Depression-era films are often regarded as escapist. Instead, May (American studies, Univ. of Minnesota; Screening Out the Past) argues that they formed part of a cultural dialog that reinvigorated the democratic spirit, creating an alternative vision of America. World War II and the Cold War ended the utopian romance of Hollywood and "validated a new corporate order and a homogenous consumer ethos." May contends that Hollywood iconoclasts (Marilyn Monroe, Billy Wilder) led the way for the 1960s counterculture and a conservative reaction led by old Hollywood pro Ronald Reagan. That's a lot for any book to take on, and along with thoughts on changing theater design, racial stereotypes in films, SAG (Screen Actors Guild) activities, and blacklisting, May has a lot to handle. Provocative theories compete with generalizations and simplifications, notably expressed in May's attempt to link the frothy Hope and Crosby "road" movies to a "taming of mass culture." This academic supplement to earlier studies like Neal Gabler's *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (LJ 11/1/88) is an appropriate purchase for university film collections. D Stephen Rees, Levittown Regional Lib., PA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. "The most exhilarating work of revisionist film history since Pauline Kael's 'Citizen Kane'... It's been a long time since the world of film has received as invigoratingly coherent an overview as May's." - Jay Carr, Boston Globe "One of the best books ever written about the movies." - Tom Ryan, The Age "A startling, revisionist history of Hollywood's impact on politics and American culture.... A convincing and important addition to American cultural criticism." - Publishers Weekly