



Movies & Mass Culture (Rutgers Depth of Field Series)

By John Belton

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Movies and Mass Culture looks at the ways in which American identity shapes and is shaped by motion pictures. Movies serve not only as texts that document who we think we are or were, but they also reflect changes in our self-image, tracing the transformation from one kind of America to another. They assist audiences in negotiating major changes in identity, carrying them across difficult periods of cultural transition so that a more or less coherent national identity again emerges. Films thus help their viewers to span the gaps and fissures that cultural changes cause, allowing passage over any disjointedness that in some way might disrupt our sense of what we believe in as a nation. This volume examines this process, illustrating the ways in which films aided America's transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy; from a nation of producers to one of consumers; and from a community of individuals to a mass society.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

This collection of previously published pieces looks at ways the American identity shapes and is shaped by the movies and how the American character and ideology is constructed, presented, and transmitted in the films of this nation. Given such a broad topic with a potentially enormous range, it is strange that editor Belton chose to include two articles each on three specific topics: film noir, African American films, and brand-name merchandizing in commercial films. Though the articles do explore different aspects of the topics, their dual presence gives the volume an unwieldy emphasis. Still, some interesting examples are given of how films reflect and document the transitional periods in the ever-evolving national self-image. Academic libraries should buy only as need demands. Marianne Cawley, Enoch Pratt Free Lib., Baltimore
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From the Back Cover

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About the Author

John Belton is a professor of English at Rutgers University and author of *Widescreen Cinema* and *American Cinema/American Culture*.

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