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in the film seven samurai 1954 a whole society is on the verge of irrevocable change many people consider this film a major achievement in japanese cinema an epic that evokes the cultural upheaval brought on by the collapse of japanese militarism in the 16th century echoing the sweeping changes occurring in the aftermath of the american occupation the plot is deceptively simple a village of farmers is beset by a horde of bandits and in desperation the village hire itinerant samurai to protect their crops and their village in the end the samurai see off the bandits together the samurai reflect the ideals and values of a noble class near the point of extinction the film may be a technical masterpiece and despite its movement and violence it appears to be a lament for a lost nobility in this book mellen contextualizes seven samurai marking its place in japanese cinema and in director akira kurosawa's career mellen explores the film's roots in mediaeval history and the film's visual language

leni riefenstahl's *olympia* 1938 is one of the most controversial films ever made capitalising on the success of *triumph of the will* 1935 her propaganda film for the nazi party riefenstahl secured hitler's approval for her grandiose plans to film the 1936 berlin olympics the result was a work as notorious for its politics as celebrated for its aesthetic power this revised edition includes new material on riefenstahl's film making career before *olympia* and her close relationship with hitler taylor downing also discusses newly available evidence on the background to the film's production that conclusively proves that the film was directly commissioned by hitler and funded through goebbels's ministry of propaganda and not as riefenstahl later claimed commissioned independently from the nazi state by the olympic authorities in writing this edition taylor downing has been given access to a magnificent new restoration of the original version of the film by the international olympic committee

no marketing blurb

lawrence of arabia is widely considered one of the ten greatest films ever made though more often by film goers and film makers than by critics this monograph argues that popular wisdom is correct and that lean's film is a unique blend of visionary image making narrative power mythopoetic charm and psychological acuteness

an alien entity that can take any living form invades an isolated scientific research station in the antarctic john carpenter's *the thing* is best known for some of the most startling visual effects surreal lurid shocking perversions of the human body ever committed to celluloid at london's national film theatre in 1995 quentin tarantino named the thing as one of his favorite films yet when it was released in 1982 it fared badly against another alien encounter movie *e t* and critics panned it but the thing has aged well and its influence can now be detected in everything from *seven* to *red dwarf* and *the x files* in her elegant and trenchant study anne billson argues that the thing has never been given its due for billson it's a landmark movie that brilliantly refines the conventions of classic horror and science fiction combining them with humor lewis carroll logic strong characterizations and prescient insight the idea of an alien species mutating and inhabiting humans resonates all too chillingly with the mad cow disease crisis and today's new and ever more powerful genetic technology

how to make comedy from a tragedy peter barnes explores lubitsch's legendary comic touch in *to be or not to be* 1942 set in nazi

occupied poland

alfred hitchcock s blackmail 1929 was the first major british sound film tom ryall examines its unusual production history and places it in the context of hitchcock s other british films of the period is is ryall argues both a considerable work of art in itself and also one of the first to display those touches we now think of as typically hitchcockian a blonde heroine in jeopardy a surprise killing some brilliantly manipulated suspense and a last reel chase around a familiar public landmark in this case the british museum there s also a cameo appearance by the director himself as a harassed traveller on the london underground

the wizard of oz was my very first literary influence writes salman rushdie in his account of the great mgm children s classic at the age of ten he had written a story over the rainbow about a colourful fantasy world but for rushdie the wizard of oz is more than a children s film and more than a fantasy it s a story whose driving force is the inadequacy of adults in which the weakness of grown ups forces children to take control of their own destinies and rushdie rejects the conventional view that its fantasy of escape from reality ends with a comforting return to home sweet home on the contrary it is a film that speaks to the exile the wizard of oz shows that imagination can become reality that there is no such place like home or rather that the only home is the one we make for ourselves rushdie s brilliant insights into a film more often seen than written about are rounded off with his typically scintillating short story at the auction of the ruby slippers about the day when dorothy s red shoes are knocked down to 15 000 at a sale of mgm props in his foreword to this special edition published to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the bfi film classics series rushdie looks back to the circumstances in which he wrote the book when in the wake of the controversy surrounding the satanic verses and the issue of a fatwa against him the idea of home and exile held a particular resonance

paul schrader was in meltdown in 1972 drinking heavily living in his car he was hospitalised with a gastric ulcer there he read about arthur bremer s attempt to assassinate alabama governor george wallace the story was the germ of his screenplay for taxi driver 1976 executives at columbia hated the script but when martin scorsese and robert de niro who were flying high after the triumphs of mean streets 1973 and the godfather part ii 1974 signed up taxi driver became too good a package to refuse scorsese transformed the script into what is now considered one of the two or three definitive films of the 1970s de niro is mesmerising as travis bickle pent up bigoted steadily slipping into psychosis the personification of american masculinity post vietnam cybill shepherd and jodie foster

give fine support and scorsese brought in bernard herrmann the greatest of film composers to write what turned out to be his last score crucially scorsese rooted taxi driver in its new york locations tuning the film s violence into the hard reality of the city technically thrilling though it is taxi driver is profoundly disturbing finding as amy taubin shows racism misogyny and gun fetishism at the heart of american culture in her foreword to this special edition published to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the bfi film classics series amy taubin considers taxi driver anew in the context of contemporary politics of race and masculinity in the us and draws on an exclusive interview with robert de niro about his memories of making the film

renoir s famous and controversial comedy of manners has a troubled history victor perkins presents here a sensitive socio historical study of renoir s revised edition of the film released 20 years after its premiere shaped by the profundity and originality of its form

on release in the 1930s snow white became a milestone in animated film disney production and the us box office today its fans cross generations and continents proving that this tale of the loveable banished princess and her seven outstanding friends possesses a special magic that makes it both an all time disney great and a true film classic

ridley scott s dystopian classic blade runner an adaptation of philip k dick s novel do androids dream of electric sheep combines noir with science fiction to create a groundbreaking cyberpunk vision of urban life in the twenty first century with replicants on the run the rain drenched los angeles which blade runner imagines is a city of oppression and enclosure but a city in which transgression and disorder can always erupt graced by stunning sets lighting effects costumes and photography blade runner succeeds brilliantly in depicting a world at once uncannily familiar and startlingly new in his innovative and nuanced reading scott bukatman details the making of blade runner and its steadily improving fortunes following its release in 1982 he situates the film in terms of debates about postmodernism which have informed much of the criticism devoted to it but argues that its tensions derive also from the quintessentially twentieth century modernist experience of the city as a space both imprisoning and liberating in his foreword to this special edition published to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the bfi film classics series bukatman suggests that blade runner s visual complexity allows it to translate successfully to the world of high definition and on demand home cinema he looks back to the science fiction tradition of the early 1980s and on to the key changes in the final version of the film in 2007 which risk diminishing the sense of instability created in the original

sixty years after its release *singin in the rain* 1951 remains one of the best loved films ever made yet despite dazzling success with the public it never received its fair share of critical analysis gene kelly's genius as a performer is undeniable acknowledged less often is his innovative contribution as director peter wollen's illuminating study of *singin in the rain* does justice to this complex film in a brilliant shot by shot analysis of the famous title number he shows how skilfully kelly weaves the dance and musical elements into the narrative successfully combining two distinctive traditions within american dance tap and ballet at the time of the film's production its scriptwriters betty comden and adolph green and indeed kelly himself were all under threat from mccarthyism wollen describes how the fallout from blacklisting curtailed the careers of many of those who worked on the film and argues convincingly that the film represents the high point in their careers in his foreword to this special edition published to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the bfi film classics series geoff andrew looks at the film's legacy and celebrates the passion lucidity and originality of wollen's analysis summing up its enduring appeal andrew writes *singin in the rain* isn't just a musical it's a movie about the movies

dana polan sets out to unlock the style and technique of *pulp fiction* he shows how broad tarantino's points of reference are and analyzes the narrative accomplishment and complexity in addition polan argues that macho attitudes celebrated in film are much more complex than they seem

vertigo 1958 is widely regarded as not only one of hitchcock's best films but one of the greatest films of world cinema made at the time when the old studio system was breaking up it functions both as an embodiment of the supremely seductive visual pleasures that classical hollywood could offer and with the help of an elaborate plot twist as a laying bare of their dangerous dark side the film's core is a study in romantic obsession as james stewart's scottie pursues madeleine judy kim novak to her death in a remote californian mission novak is ice cool but vulnerable stewart in the darkest role of his career genial on the surface but damaged within although it can be seen as hitchcock's most personal film charles barr argues that like *citizen kane* *vertigo* is at the same time a triumph not so much of individual authorship as of creative collaboration he highlights the crucial role of screenwriters alec coppel and samuel taylor and by a combination of textual and contextual analysis explores the reasons why *vertigo* continues to inspire such fascination in his foreword to this special edition published to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the bfi film classics series barr looks afresh at *vertigo* alongside the recently rediscovered lost silent *the white shadow* 1924 scripted by hitchcock which also features the

trope of the double and at the acclaimed contemporary silent film the artist 2011 which pays explicit homage to vertigo in its soundtrack

citizen kane s reputation as one of the greatest films of all time is matched only by the accumulation of critical commentary that surrounds it what more can there be to say about a masterpiece so universally acknowledged laura mulvey in a fresh and original reading illuminates the richness of the film both thematically and stylistically relating it to welles s political background and its historical context in a lucid and perceptive critique she also investigates the psychoanalytic structure that underlies the film s presentation of kane s biography for once taking seriously what orson welles himself disparagingly referred to as dollar book freud in her foreword to this special edition published to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the bfi film classics series laura mulvey focuses on the film s politics highlighting the contemporary rhymes in kane s portrayal of a scandal prone press baron in a time of economic crisis

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