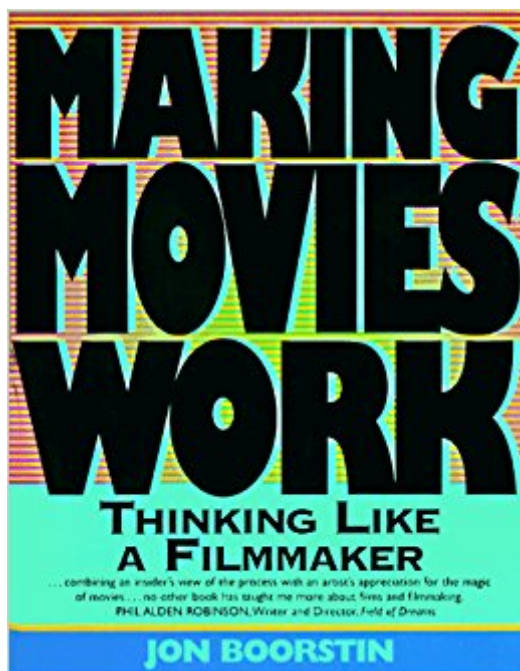


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Making Movies Work: Thinking Like A Filmmaker



Synopsis

MAKING MOVIES WORK is a fascinating and accessible guide for both filmmakers and serious film fans. It is about how filmmakers think about film. "Through thoughtful examination of the filmmaker's art, Jon Boorstin enhances our sense of enjoyment and appreciation of the results.--Robert Redford.

Book Information

Paperback: 228 pages

Publisher: Silman-James Press; 2nd edition (October 1, 1995)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1879505274

ISBN-13: 978-1879505278

Product Dimensions: 9 x 7 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #214,337 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #292 in Books > Humor &

Entertainment > Movies > Video > Direction & Production #346 in Books > Humor &

Entertainment > Movies > Direction & Production #617 in Books > Humor & Entertainment >

Movies > History & Criticism

Customer Reviews

The book was shipped and arrived quickly. The book was super cheap so I did not have high expectations, but it came in much better shape than I expected it to. I would definitely recommend to other students. I will use them again

Extremely well written book providing interesting insights into how to make and watch movies, and what makes great movies work.

Easy read, my film professor loves it. Great stories inside.

For those people that just stumbled on this book and are not aspiring filmmakers, the insight and even the abundance of photographs from major scenes are worth the purchase price. For the rest of us, everyone knows what makes a professional in any field is that little extra effort to be one-step ahead of the next person. This book may be that next step. A paragraph from the introduction says it all: "How does a surgeon attack a tumor, a lawyer a murder case, or an architect a concert hall?"

When you learn a craft, or a profession, or an art (and film is all of these), you have to master a way of thinking as well as a set of skills. A way of approaching the problem that make techniques your tool."

If you are looking for theory or for technical analysis of film, this is not the place. If your interest, instead, is insight into the thinking that goes into making (mostly mainstream) films this is an excellent starting point. Boorstin doesn't write like a movie critic or a professor of film; he writes like a very knowledgeable and reflective craftsman who has insider experience on filmmaking and has been able to capture that experience into a series of analytic perspectives on the nature of "movies that work." He breaks his analysis of the "working of movies" down into three perspectives that amount to the various levels at which the film needs to operate on or captivate its audience. A movie that "works" has to work on all three levels, though it may emphasize one over the others. First, it should appeal to the "voyeur" in the audience. We watch movies because we want to see, and a movie works at a voyeuristic level when it shows us something that we can both believe and be interested in. That sounds straightforward enough, but the voyeuristic perspective allows him to go into the "why" behind a wide range of cinematic techniques, and to introduce quite a bit of the vocabulary you'd find in another introduction to film but might not see why it was so important. Secondly, the film has to work at a "vicarious" level: we have to care about the characters in the film, and what they do has to be emotionally true. Under this heading Boorstin is able to discuss a range of topics, from Kuleshov's psychology experiments with film montage to what makes a film soundtrack work. The third level is the "visceral": films can work, not only because they are intriguing or make us feel something for the characters, but also because they make us feel something period. The rise of horror cinema is directly connected to this longing for a visceral experience: we don't just want to care about someone who is potentially being harmed but we want to feel their fear along with them. The book goes on to discuss combinations between these, the differences between narratives and films of other forms, and the difference between mainstream Hollywood cinema and avant garde or foreign cinema. My only quibble with the book is that he doesn't address a fourth level at which films work -- maybe because it's hard to come up with a "V" word for what might be called the "reflective dimension" of film, and I believe that a discussion of this dimension would complement his other discussions and allow him to introduce in an unpretentious and insider fashion themes that are the subject of what film theorists call "ideology." Every film, at some level, has a theme -- has to have something it is "about" and this is a level that is not only of interest to film theorists but also to filmmakers. Sidney Lumet's wonderful "Making Movies"

discusses this at length. For a film to work it has to have a theme and it has to somehow make sense of that theme. In some films, and not only foreign or avant-garde films, this "thematic" or "reflective" dimension is the dominant one. Take the success of the "Matrix" for example -- what makes it stunning is not only its superb visuals (voyeuristic level) or its strong narrative (such that we vicariously connect with Neo) or its tense mood (such that we have a visceral experience), but also that it forces us to think, raising interesting questions and posing tentative answers to those questions. In the end, though, this is merely a quibble with what is still a very worthwhile book that I am glad I encountered. While the style is personal and the ideas are to some degree idiosyncratic to the author, it is a rare book that offers so much information and insight and is such an enjoyable read. (I would compare this book to other remarkable and insightful works by working filmmakers such as Lumet's *Making Movies* and Walter Murch's *In the Blink of the Eye* -- and if I had to choose which one to recommend of these three I would say that Boorstin's book is more comprehensive and can likely teach more about the nature of film and filmmaking than the others.)

The only reason I did not give this book 5 stars is, because it is not a smashing, shocking masterpiece. But it is still a VERY GOOD book. It gives one a great first taste on filmmaking, touching on almost every topic and field in the production process. It is also very well organized into a system of own logic, and contains quite a few funny and interesting anecdotes, which make it more like a personal friend instead of just "a book". The language is clear and "user-friendly" (which was quite important for me, English being only my second lang.), and Mr. Boorstin is like a smiling tour-guide that takes one around the various aspects of the craft. It is an excellent introduction to all people interested in film, and to all those who just want to have a good read about 'the film job' in general. Read it and You will like it, if it does not make You want to fall in love with film right away. If You already are: You will learn not just about the craft, but about creative processes and "Hollywood vs. World"-philosophy too, while You get to understand what actually makes a filmmaker. A definite 4 and 1/2.....

Based on the favorable reviews this title received, I decided to pick up a copy of Jon Boorstin's "Making Movies Work." After reading most of it, I remain nonplussed as to why it's received such acclaim and attention. This book is really a collection of pseudo-intellectual and highly pretentious rantings on various aspects of the filmmaking process. The author speaks with authority, as if he is an experienced master craftsman of film but, when looking at his resume, his list of credits is EXTREMELY thin. Thus, I wonder how Boorstin can draw many of his conclusions and postulate his

theories on filmmaking. It seems he's never had the experience of writing or directing a feature motion picture of his own, let alone enough to make him an authority on filmmaking. The cover highlights many positive comments by well-known filmmakers (Robert Redford, Alan Pakula, Paul Schrader, etc.). But in reading the author's bio, we see he either worked FOR these people or had other social connections to them. I suspect these established writers and directors were doing the author of favor by giving his tome a thumbs up. For anyone interested in a much better book about the filmmaking experience and creative process, John Sayles' book on the making of his film "Matewan" is far superior to "Making Movies Work." This book is less pretentious, and comes from a man who has actually made numerous films of his own. That is a book deserving 5 stars, not "Making Movies Work."

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