11-2010

Film Noir: The Encyclopedia

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This fourth edition of Film Noir (3rd ed., ed. by Silver and E. Ward, CH, Sep'93, 31-0027) extends what has been the greatest strength of this work: the detailed, readable essays that contextualize plot details with keen and insightful critical analysis. The five editors and 42 contributors come from backgrounds as diverse as academe, the entertainment industry, professional film criticism, and the world of aficionados and collectors; as a result, the essays not only reflect encyclopedic knowledge of film but also illuminate the history, technology, or technique of each film. Each entry highlights, within a director's oeuvre, a distinctive feature such as cinematography, sociological context, or place, among many others. The first section covers the "classic period" of film noir, defined roughly as ranging from the Maltese Falcon (1941) to Touch of Evil (1958), with film essays and thematic essays. The second part addresses neo-noir, including films such as Blood Simple, Gattaca, and Sin City, which re-create or interpret the noir mood. This lavishly illustrated and thoroughly indexed volume features a selected bibliography of books, essays, articles, and DVD commentaries. Summing Up: Recommended. Academic and public collections; lower-level undergraduates and above and general readers. -- P. Finley, University of Nevada, Las Vegas