1 A Space Odyssey Bfi Modern Classics Bfi Film Classics

BFI film classicsSeven SamuraiBFI Film ClassicsBFI Film Classics LeafletModern TimesBfi Film Classics PosterOlympiaLawrence of ArabiaMetropolisTo be Or Not to beVertigoSingin' in the RainThe Wizard of OzBlade RunnerDon't Look NowWandaHeatThe Red ShoesPulp FictionMean Streets British Film Institute Joan Mellen BFI Publishing Joan Mellen BFI Publishing Taylor Downing Kevin Jackson Thomas Elsaesser Peter Barnes Charles Barr Peter Wollen Salman Rushdie Scott Bukatman Mark Sanderson Elena Gorfinkel Nick James Pamela Hutchinson Dana Polan Demetrios Matheou

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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 achievemnet 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 occuring 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

modern times was charlie chaplin s last full length silent film the author situates modern times within the context of chaplin s life work exploring its history and influences she explores how the film s themes of oppression industrialization and dehumanization are embodied in the little tramp s struggle to survive in the modern world

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

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

metropolis is a monumental work on its release in 1925 after sixteen months filming it was germany s most expensive feature film a canvas for director fritz lang s increasingly extravagant ambitions lang inspired by the skyline of new york created a whole new vision of cities one of the greatest works of science fiction the film also tells human stories about love and family thomas elsaesser explores the cultural phenomenon of metropolis its different versions there is no definitive one its changing meanings and its role as a database of twentieth century imagery and ideologies in his foreword to this special edition published to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the bfi film classics series elsaesser discusses the impact of the 27 minutes of lost footage discovered in buenos

aires in 2008 and incorporated in a restored edition which premiered in 2010

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

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

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 innovatory 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

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

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

don t look now released in 1973 confirmed director nicolas roeg as one of the most stylish and innovative british directors of the postwar period adapted from a short story by daphne du maurier it is both a complex study of how people come to terms with grief and a chilling tale of murder set among the canals and churches of venice featuring telling performances by julie christie and donald sutherland as the couple whose daughter has tragically died don t look now depicts the way in which the macabre and the everyday are intertwined in his lucid subtle account mark sanderson describes the collaboration between director and actors that sustained the film s emotional richness he returns to du maurier s original text and to the traditions of gothic writing that underpin don t look now s combination of horror melodrama and black comedy sanderson examines the film s intricate visual style uncovering the way in which particular motifs are used to amplify its depiction of two terrible deaths he finds compensation for the film s grimly fatalistic view of life in its celebration of sexual relationships and the power of recollection the book includes an exclusive and in depth interview with roeg as well as rare and unpublished comments from christie in his foreword to this special edition published to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the bfi film classics series jason wood places don t look now in the context of roeg s film making careeer and draws upon roeg s revealing insights into the film s production

actor turned writer director barbara loden s only feature film wanda 1970 tells the story of an alienated working class woman wanda goronski played by loden who abandons her life as a coal miner s wife and mother electing instead to drift bracing in its realist texture and proto feminist in its sensibility it received critical acclaim upon release winning the critics prize at the venice film festival in 1970 today wanda is considered one of the most notable films made by a woman director and a core work of american independent cinema elena gorfinkel s study of this singular film traces loden s creative process and unconventional approach to filmmaking drawing on archival sources

including scripts interviews production records oral history and previously unseen ephemera she examines the film s de dramatised aesthetic one that rebukes the artifice and slickness of hollywood gorfinkel considers loden s craft in her framing of cinematic time manipulation of gesture voice and posture narrative ellipsis and in her use of location and non professional actors providing an account of wanda s exhibition and reception in the 1970s and after she traces the film s feminist legacies and its lasting influence on contemporary filmmakers artists and writers

robert de niro and al pacino have acted opposite each other only once in heat michael mann s operatic 1995 heist thriller de niro is neil mccauley a skilled professional thief at the centre of a tight knit criminal team pacino is vincent hanna the haunted driven cop determined to hunt him down boasting a series of meticulously orchestrated setpieces that underline mann s sense of scale and architecture heat also presents a rhapsody to los angeles as hanna closes in on his prey for nick james the pleasures and virtues of heat are mixed and complex its precise compositions and minimalist style are entangled with a particular kind of extravagant bombast and while its vision of male teamwork is richly compelling it comes close to glorifying machismo but these complexities only add to the interest of this hugely ambitious and accomplished film which confirmed mann s place in the front rank of american film makers in his afterword to this new edition published to coincide with the film s 30th anniversary nick james reflects upon its lasting impact and on michael mann s subsequent film making career

endlessly fascinating dark and bright the red shoes 1948 employs every branch of the cinematic arts to sweep the audience off its feet invigorated by the transcendence of art itself only to leave them with troubling questions representing the climax of michael powell and emeric pressburger s celebrated run of six exceptional feature films the film remains a beloved if unsettling and often divisive classic pamela hutchinson s study of the film examines its breathtaking use of technicolor music choreography editing and art direction at the zenith of powell and pressburger s capacity for composed cinema through a close reading of key scenes particularly the film s famous extended ballet sequence she considers the unconventional use of ballet as uncanny spectacle and the feminist implications of the central story of female sacrifice hutchinson goes on to consider the film s lasting and wide reaching influence tracing its impact on the film musical genre and horror cinema with filmmakers such as joanna hogg sally potter martin scorsese and brian de palma having cited the film as an inspiration

pulp fiction was one of the films that defined american cinema of the 1990s and remains one of the stand out movies of its director quentin tarantino tarantino s style violent fast funny and full of knowing pop culture references epitomises 90s post modernism pulp fiction was a phenomenal cult success and one of the first films to generate hot debate in internet chatrooms and on fan websites dana polan s compelling analysis sets out to uncover the style and technique of pulp fiction he shows how broad tarantino s points of reference are and analyzes the film s narrative accomplishment and complexity where some critics dismissed pulp fiction for its violence and its worship of a certain brand of cool polan shows how the film exemplifies new kinds of engagement with cultural and social codes such as those around racial identity in addition polan argues that the film s celebration of macho attitudes is more nuanced than might first appear in a new afterword to this new edition polan looks back on pulp fiction 30 years after its first release

mean streets was martin scorsese s third feature film and the one that confirmed him as a major new talent on its premiere at the new york film festival in 1973 the critic pauline kael hailed the film as a true original of our period a triumph of personal film making the tale of combative friends and small time crooks is set amid the bars pool halls tenements and streets of manhattan s little italy scorsese has said of his childhood neighbourhood its very texture was interwoven with organised crime and this quality would dramatically inform the tone and restless energy of his seminal film demetrios matheou s insightful study considers mean streets production history in the context of the new hollywood period of american cinema noting also the key roles played by john cassavetes and roger corman he analyses the importance of scorsese s background to the film s characters and themes including preoccupations with guilt redemption and criminal subcultures the development of the director s film making process and signature style the way in which he both drew upon and invigorated the crime genre his relationship with emerging stars robert de niro and harvey keitel and the film s reception and legacy matheou argues that while taxi driver 1976 and raging bull 1980 are regarded as scorsese s greatest films of the period mean streets is the more influential achievement with it scorsese not only paved the way for a new kind of crime movie not least his own goodfellas 1990 but also inspired generations of independently minded film makers

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