



The Whole Equation: A History of Hollywood

David Thomson

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A magnificent history of Hollywood from the invention of film to the present day, by the everywhere acclaimed David Thomson, who has established himself as the “greatest living film critic and historian” (*The Atlantic Monthly*), “irreplaceable” (*The New York Times*), and simply “the best writer about the movies” (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

Now we have his master work, *The Whole Equation*, which, in his own words, embraces “the murder and the majesty, the business statistics and millions of us being moved, the art and the awfulness.” It accommodates “the artistic careers, the lives of the pirates, the ebb and flow if business, the sociological impact—in short, the wonder in the dark, the calculation in the offices, and the staggering impact on America of moving pictures. Which is also the thunderous artillery of America unleashed on the world.”

Thomson tells us how D. W. Griffith and Charlie Chaplin created the first movies of mass appeal. He writes about Louis B. Mayer, who understood the whole equation and reaped the profits. He shows us how David O. Selznick exemplified the vanity and passion that gets memorable movies made; how the movies, offering a sense of common experience, helped Americans through the difficult years of the 1930s and '40s; how and why the quest for the blockbuster changed the industry.

He examines the films of Capra, Wilder, Hitchcock, Spielberg; of Gable, Cagney, Monroe, Crawford, Brando, Bogart, Nicholson, Kidman; of Irving Thalberg, Lew Wasserman, Harvey Weinstein—and scores more. He considers noir films, the blacklist, agents, method acting. He tells us the stories behind *The Godfather*, *Chinatown*, and *Jaws*. And he follows the money—a trip essential to understanding Hollywood at its most thrilling and most disappointing.

David Thomson has given us a one-volume history of Hollywood that is as well one of the most brilliant, most insightful, entertaining, and illuminating books ever written on American film.

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