



Postmodern Hollywood: What's New in Film and Why It Makes Us Feel So Strange

By M. Keith Booker



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Postmodernism is essential to American culture today. We can see its manifestations on billboards and on television; we can hear its tone on the radio and in everyday conversation; and we can even sense its outlook in how we live our lives. This volume presents an accessible and brief summary of postmodernism, especially as it pertains to American cinema—one of the central players and leading lights in the development of this cultural attitude. Four distinct sections investigate postmodernist fragmentation, musical use, and pastiches of previous television shows and cinematic genres in such films as Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*, David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*, and Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette*.

Discussions of the phenomenon of postmodernism have established certain characteristics that are typical of postmodernist culture. These characteristics include formal fragmentation, a tendency toward a particular kind of nostalgia, and the use of materials and styles borrowed from previous films and other cultural products. This volume presents a brief summary of the characteristics that have typically been associated with postmodernism, especially as they pertain to film. It illustrates those characteristics with discussions of a wide variety of American films of the past thirty years, noting how those films participate in the phenomenon of postmodernism. Emphasis is on popular, commercial films, rather than the more esoteric, experimental products that have sometimes been associated with postmodern film.

Booker's work contains detailed discussions of a wide variety of American films—including classics like *Sullivan's Travels* and *The Last Picture Show*, and recent successes such as *Scream*, *Natural Born Killers*, *Memento*, *Moulin Rouge*, and *Fight Club*—noting how these films participate in the phenomenon of postmodernism, and how they have helped to shape its current form.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The prolific Booker contributes a valuable cultural critique of postmodernism in contemporary film. Building on the theory of Fredric Jameson, the author addresses such postmodern manifestations as the nostalgic use of music, fragmentation, hyperlink editing, and pastiche. Perhaps his most important contribution is his examination of individual postmodern filmmakers: Tim Burton, David Cronenberg, Joel and Ethan Coen, Brian De Palma, Quentin Tarantino, David Lynch, et al. Transforming the notion of the auteur, Booker demonstrates how these filmmakers are not necessarily visionary singular artists but directors who know how to borrow from the past in creative and, at times, unnerving ways. Postmodernism challenges the traditional notion of creativity in film production. Booker's discussion of the relationship between late capitalism and postmodern filmmaking introduces intriguing new questions about cinematic challenges to hegemony and ideology.... this volume is absolutely necessary for those interested in contemporary film. The passages on such individual postmodern films as *Requiem for a Dream* and *The Man Who Wasn't There* will inform and structure undergraduate research papers for a generation. Essential. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty and professionals." - **Choice**

Review

"*Postmodern Hollywood* skillfully combines discussions of cinematic style and technique with investigations of more traditional substances--like plot and character--and thus offers an informative survey of recent and contemporary films. M. Keith Booker's attention to topics like pastiche and nostalgia make postmodernism accessible to all. The volume gives new insights into every film it discusses and makes an important contribution to criticism on the modern cinema." (David See, Chair of American Literature, Liverpool University)

"M. Keith Booker puts postmodern Hollywood fare into engaging political and aesthetic contexts. He covers a plethora of fascinating films with considerable verve and authority, and his highly readable style is blessedly free of both academic jargon and show biz hype." (Dan Georgakas, *Cineaste*)

About the Author

M. Keith Booker is Professor of English at the University of Arkansas. He is the author of numerous articles and books on modern literature, literary theory, television, and film including *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War* (2001), *Strange TV: Innovative Television Series from The Twilight Zone to The X-Files* (2002), *Science Fiction Television* (2004), *Alternate Americas: Science Fiction Film and American Culture* (2006), *Drawn to Television: Prime-Time Animation from The Flintstones to Family Guy* (2006), and *From Box Office to Ballot Box: The American Political Film* (2007).

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