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Black and White Cinema: A Short History

Wheeler Winston Dixon

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From the glossy monochrome of the classic Hollywood romance, to the gritty greyscale of the gangster picture, to film noir's moody interplay of light and shadow, black-and-white cinematography has been used to create a remarkably wide array of tones. Yet today, with black-and-white film stock nearly impossible to find, these cinematographic techniques are virtually extinct, and filmgoers' appreciation of them is similarly waning.

Black and White Cinema is the first study to consider the use of black-and-white as an art form in its own right, providing a comprehensive and global overview of the era when it flourished, from the 1900s to the 1960s. Acclaimed film scholar Wheeler Winston Dixon introduces us to the masters of this art, discussing the signature styles and technical innovations of award-winning cinematographers like James Wong Howe, Gregg Toland, Freddie Francis, and Sven Nykvist. Giving us a unique glimpse behind the scenes, Dixon also reveals the creative teams—from lighting technicians to matte painters—whose work profoundly shaped the look of black-and-white cinema.

More than just a study of film history, this book is a rallying cry, meant to inspire a love for the artistry of black-and-white film, so that we might work to preserve this important part of our cinematic heritage. Lavishly illustrated with more than forty on-the-set stills, *Black and White Cinema* provides a vivid and illuminating look at a creatively vital era.

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