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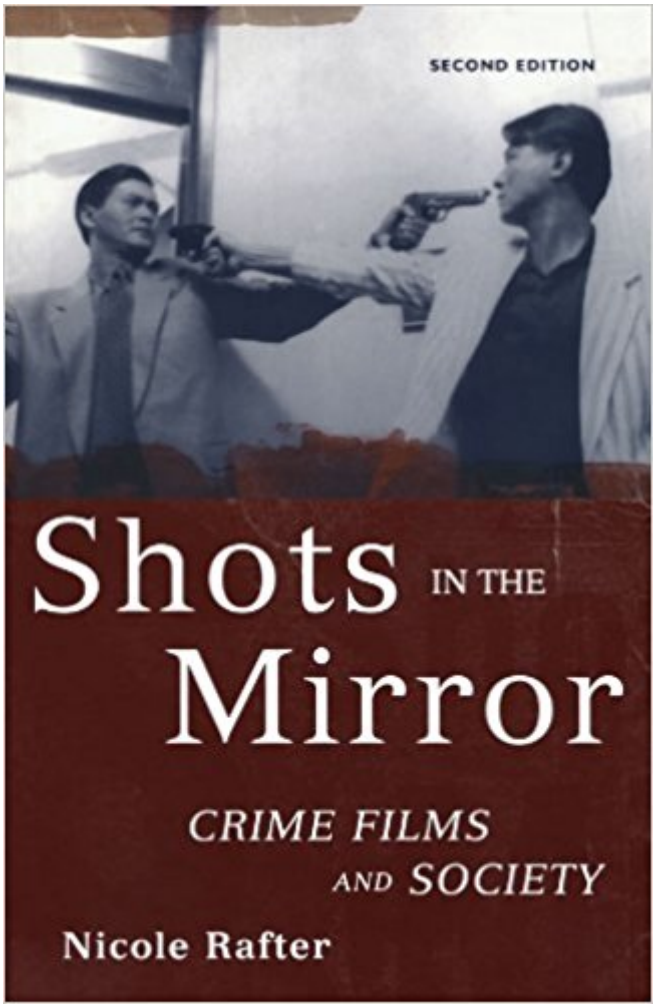
Shots In The Mirror: Crime Films And Society



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Synopsis

Movies play a central role in shaping our understanding of crime and the world generally, helping us define what is good and bad, desirable and unworthy, lawful and illicit, strong and weak. Crime films raise controversial issues about the distribution of social power and the meanings of deviance, and they provide a safe space for fantasies of rebellion, punishment, and the restoration of order. In the first comprehensive study of its kind, well-known criminologist Nicole Rafter examines the relationship between society and crime films from the perspectives of criminal justice, film history and technique, and sociology. Shots in the Mirror begins with an overview of the history of crime films and the emergence of various genres, surveying important films from the silent era, the early gangster films of the ’30s, classic film noir, the work of Hitchcock, and recent innovations by Scorsese, Tarrentino, and the Coen brothers. Keeping pace with the evolution of crime films, Shots in the Mirror has been updated to respond to recent developments, trends, and shifting circumstances in the genre. This new edition expands the scope and increases the depth and variety of the previous edition by including foreign films in addition to American movies. Rafter also integrates an entirely new body of literature into the study, reflecting the rapid expansion of scholarship on law-related films over the past three years. She has added a chapter on psycho movies, a previously unrecognized subcategory of crime films. Another new chapter, "The Alternative Tradition and Films of Moral Ambiguity," focuses on recent sex crime films. This new final chapter grows organically out of the first edition’s distinction between traditional crime films, with their easy solutions to social problems, and those more unusual critical films which belong to the bleaker, morally ambiguous, alternative tradition. Rafter examines more than three hundred films in this study, considering what they have to say, socially and ideologically, about the causes of crime, and adding valuable contributions to the on-going debate on whether media representations of violence cause crime. Shots in the Mirror is both a marvelous history of crime films and a trenchant analysis of their complex relationship to larger society.

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Customer Reviews

In a lucid analysis that begins with "The History of Crime Films" by Drew Dodd, Rafter (law, policy, and society program, Northeastern Univ.) examines how crime films reflect and shape real life. She focuses on criminology in crime films, cop films, courtroom films, prison and execution films, crime film heroes, and the future. Predicting that demographic changes will dramatically modify content and style, she paints a rosy picture of how independent filmmakers and entrenched studio executives alike will create tighter, more meaningful crime films. The most significant crime movies are identified and/or discussed, with the exceptions of Point Blank (1967) and Impulse (1990). Some readers will argue that "cop" movies began not with Dirty Harry (1971) but rather with The Naked City (1948). Designating Crime a category, not a genre, and including such crossover films as The Wild Bunch, The Last Detail, and RoboCop, Rafter could also have investigated why criminality infests so many modern comedies. Useful notes are included. Recommended for film/performing arts collections in public and academic libraries.-Kim R. Holston, American Inst. for Charity Property Casualty Underwriters, Malvern, PA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The subject of crime and criminals has been a central part of the film industry since its inception. Today, after more than a century of cinema, scholars have begun to explore the complex relationship between crime and criminals and how those topics are portrayed on the screen. Rafter, a professor at Northeastern University Law School, has noted that no serious studies have been conducted of how on-screen crime influences our perception of real-world crime. It is an ambitious topic, and she handles it well in a very brief volume. First defining the broad category of films that focus on crime and its consequences, Rafter then compiles a thorough history of crime films and explores how the films and their heroes have changed over a century, much as society’s conception of the causes of and solutions to crime have changed. She concludes with a very interesting exploration of future social problems and how they may be played out on screen. Although somewhat academic, this book provides food for thought on a very clever topic. Ted LeventhalCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

Great textbook - its more helpful if you've seen the movies it discusses.

Great read

best price thats why i bought it but that was many years ago in like 07

Doesn't match the hard copy but does the job

I'm a college student and it is very important for me too have my books too do homework. My book arrived on the third day of my purshase in excellent conditions. Thank you very much. Good job.

K

Nicole Rafter's text offers a rigorous analysis of important social issues facing not only scholars and students of criminality and criminal justice but members of our own communities as well. Film- like other media- provides a viable avenue for academic study and discourse and should be used both as a tool for instruction as well as a subject for critical inspection. Rafter addresses seminal, contemporary "crime and justice" issues by considering the various genres of crime films, namely cop films, courtroom dramas, prisons, and crime itself. She contends that crime films in each of these genres make two general arguments. First, they all criticize society to a certain extent, whether the issue concerns excessive use of force by the police or the violent crime rate. Secondly, these films provide the audience with resolution by displaying the triumph of "justice" over corruption and brutality. As Rafter explains, crime films offer us an uncomfortable sense of gratification.One of the many strengths of this text concerns its accessibility to both members of the academy and the general public. Rafter's text steps outside the boundaries of criminology and criminal justice and embraces a variety of disciplines and perspectives. As she maintains throughout her book, crime films reflect our ideas about social, economic, and political issues, and they shape the way in which we think about them. By examining the interrelationships between film history and technique, social history, criminal justice and criminological theory from multiple interdisciplinary perspectives, Rafter offers a fresh and (enjoyably) enlightening approach to the study and understanding of crime, criminality, and criminal justice within the context of film. Albeit a scholarly text, Rafter's book reads like a novel; extremely engaging in its description of crime films throughout various genres and

generations, readers from various academic disciplines and those outside academia alike will find this book to be both widely entertaining and intellectually rigorous and stimulating.

This wonderful book grew out of a college course that Nicole Rafter developed on crime films and society. It will interest general readers, too--those of us who enjoy crime films and are curious about their history and enduring appeal. The book, covering American film from the early 1900s through 1998, begins with an introductory chapter on the history of crime films, followed by chapters on specific genres, such as cop films and courtroom dramas, and other topics.Rafter's guiding focus is the interaction between crime films and their eras' dominant beliefs and controversies. Crime films mirror cultural ideas about crime and help shape them. Thus, she features films that have received critical or popular recognition and provide provocative entree to significant social issues of their times. Crime films, Rafter argues, are social tools, as well. They help build consensus, expose our differences, and chart new courses of action. While readers will not always agree with Rafter's interpretations and analyses, they will become more sensitive observers, more active players in the ongoing exchange between crime films and everyday social life. In addition, readers will come away from this engaging book with a long list of films to see and to rethink. (Rafter mentions over 300 crime films in all, discussing over 100 in some depth.)On a personal note, I share the author's observation that students in criminology are well versed in crime films and interested in their import. SHOTS IN THE MIRROR provides a marvelous vehicle for capitalizing on their interest and broadening the study of crime, as well. The book's historical perspective and its sensitivity to issues of race and gender could also prove useful for other courses in the social sciences.

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