

training and orientation films for the military. It seems that, like World War I before, or the Korean and Vietnam Wars after, World War II was the most motion picture friendly war of the last century. For Hollywood and American culture, World War II remains “a safe bet” to reinforce the comfort-based ideology resting on the known outcome of that war, and Stephen Spielberg continues to demonstrate this.

Whilst the book appears to have a largely US perspective, the chapter on “marketing” the bombing of Dresden considers the viewpoint of Germany and Great Britain, as well as the USA, through a German mini-series called *Dresden* (2006 Richter). Because of the intention to export *Dresden* to British, Canadian, New Zealand and Australian markets, it meant that consideration had to be given as to how to represent British Bomber Command and, in particular, Arthur “Bomber” Harris, its chief. The controversy in the UK with regard to the fire-bombing of Dresden began soon after the event and still continues.

Five of the chapters of the book deal with the subject of women in war and certainly give much greater exploration than simply leaving them as “the girl he left behind” or a “soldier’s tart” or a “fraternising woman”. In the history of cinema, there have been films that have been linked to a rise in military enlistment and some that are regularly shown to new recruits as both inspirational and reassuring. Some films have been considered to be positively pro-war such as *Sergeant York* (1941 Hawks). Another such film is *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949 Dwayne) which is the film that catapulted John Wayne into military glory and cult stardom. In the Vietnam War era, John Wayne was back with the more controversial *The Green Berets* (1968 Barrett *et al.*) heavily panned by critics, but successful at the box office and which has been linked to an increase in recruitment figures in 1968.

But if *The Green Berets* was pro-war, what about anti-war films? It is generally accepted that documentary films may be able to put forward a clearer position against war and have more long-lasting effects on viewers’ attitudes and beliefs and what about the fictional film? It is well known that the narrative film is likely to have a great circulation than a documentary, and that documentaries tend to be watched mainly by those who already agree with its argument. The answer is extremely difficult. *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930 Milestone) is one such film and, because the First World War has been considered by many historians as tragically unnecessary, the war lends itself to such treatment and, as well as Milestone’s film, others are *The Big Parade* (1925 Vividor), the French film *La Grande Illusion* (1937 Renoir), and, of course, *Paths of Glory* (1957 Kubrick).

For those who wish to make a film that condemns war, the chapter gives a list of tropes, significant to the anti-war film genre. These include the use of children as victims; emphasis on the youth of soldiers; stress on death and dismemberment; the rape and abuse of women as allegories or inevitable results of war; claims of historical inauthenticity; and/or an unexpectedly tragic ending.

The printing and general layout of this book makes it quite clear to read and, despite it being 471 pages long, the binding is such that the pages lay perfectly open at whatever point the reader has reached. Various film stills appear through the book, not in huge abundance, but sufficient to make that point. All of the photographs have a somewhat overall grey appearance, which is often the case, and, I suspect, photographic quality is tied to production costs. Each chapter, or essay, ends with detailed notes, comprehensive references and further reading. The book includes a substantial index.

Despite my criticisms, I found this to be a very worthy piece of work, which presents new, up-to-date, challenging and refreshing views on the war film genre. This is certainly a book for academic libraries, and particularly those specialising in film studies and, indeed, those teaching military, war and conflict studies.

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Mars in the Movies: A History

Thomas Kent Miller

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Since its initial discovery by ancient Egyptian astronomers, Mars has been an object of astral wonder and fascination. Within the past century, Hollywood’s obsession with the red planet has produced a considerable amount of movies and television programmes devoted to it with undeniably mixed results. In *Mars in the Movies: A History*, former NASA employee and magazine editor Thomas Kent Miller sifts through the

celluloid output, closely examines 98 films, television movies and direct-to-video titles, and in the process, pens the ultimate, 292-page love letter to an often-overlooked sci-fi sub-genre.

Rather than discuss the works in chronological order, Miller organizes his chapters thematically and covers such topics as The State of Mars Cinema Before 1950, Voyages to Mars, Invasions from Mars and Inhabited Mars. A standalone chapter is devoted to the seminal 1950 film *Destination Moon* and another examines lesser known interpretations of *The War of the Worlds* (H. G. Wells). He reserves later chapters for slapstick comedies, parodies and satires, and concludes with an examination of six works slated for release after he had completed the bulk of his work on the manuscript.

Within each chapter, Miller's entries are formatted to include concise technical information (film studio, cast, crew, etc.); snippets of positive and negative reviews from a variety of film critics; straightforward, non-biased summaries; and commentary composed of trivia, as well as the author's opinions and critical assessments of the film. Make no mistake, Miller is authoritative on this topic and it is refreshing to read his insightful comments and, in some cases, his second opinions after re-watching certain works. For instance, he includes two separate reviews of *The Martian* (Ridley Scott 2015), one for the two-dimensional theatrical release and one for the three-dimensional home viewing.

Over 65 black and white illustrations, including movie posters, half sheets and film stills are peppered throughout the softcover work and, at times, this reviewer selfishly wished that some of the wackier film posters from the 1950s had been reproduced in full colour.

Miller rounds out the book with three appendixes detailing animated works, television anthology series, and a final chronological listing of all of the movies contained within the book. He also includes a comprehensive bibliography of books and magazine articles followed by a listing useful internet sites for further reading. A detailed and well-organized index completes the work.

In terms of usefulness, *Mars in the Movies* would make an excellent addition to the science fiction and/or film section of any reference collection. Since it is written by a fan, for other fans of the genre, the easy-to-read format is suitable for academic, public and even high school libraries. While there are other reference works currently on the market devoted to sci-fi films, *Keep Watching the Skies* (Warren, 2010) and *Top 100 Sci-Fi Movies* (Gerani, 2011) both come to mind, there is not one that is singularly devoted to the subject of movies about Mars.

Miller's book would serve as a compliment to both of these and to other, more generalized film reference works like the annually published *VideoHound's Golden Movie Retriever* or *Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide* which ceased publication in 2015.

John Powell

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- Gerani, G. (2011), *Top 100 Sci-Fi Movies*, IDW, San Diego, CA.
 Warren, B. (2010), *Keep Watching the Skies! American Science Fiction Movies of the Fifties, The 21st Century Edition*, McFarland, Jefferson, NC.

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Oak Furniture: The British Tradition: A History of Early Furniture in the British Isles and New England [Revised edition]

Victor Chinnery

ACC Art Books

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Oak Furniture: The British Tradition is a massive compendium originally authored by Victor Chinnery (1941-2011) in 1979. With various reprints in 1984, 1986, 1988, 1993, 1998, 2000 and 2002, this 2016 revised edition is an improvement in terms of editing and authorship and redesign and colouring of the included photographs. Chinnery was, without a doubt, an expert in this particular field and, as a result, this tome continues to hold its position as an important and valuable work. Chinnery was a founding member of the Regional Furniture Society and the Merchant's House Museum, a Society of Antiquaries fellow and an auctioneer at some of the most reputable auction houses, such as Christie's and Sotheby's. In addition, he was also a lecturer at John Makepeace's School for Craftsman and a consultant to the Historic Royal Palaces and many other British museums. *Oak Furniture: The British Tradition* is proof of his reputable knowledge on British antiques. It is truly a labour of love that displays the extent of his knowledge for British