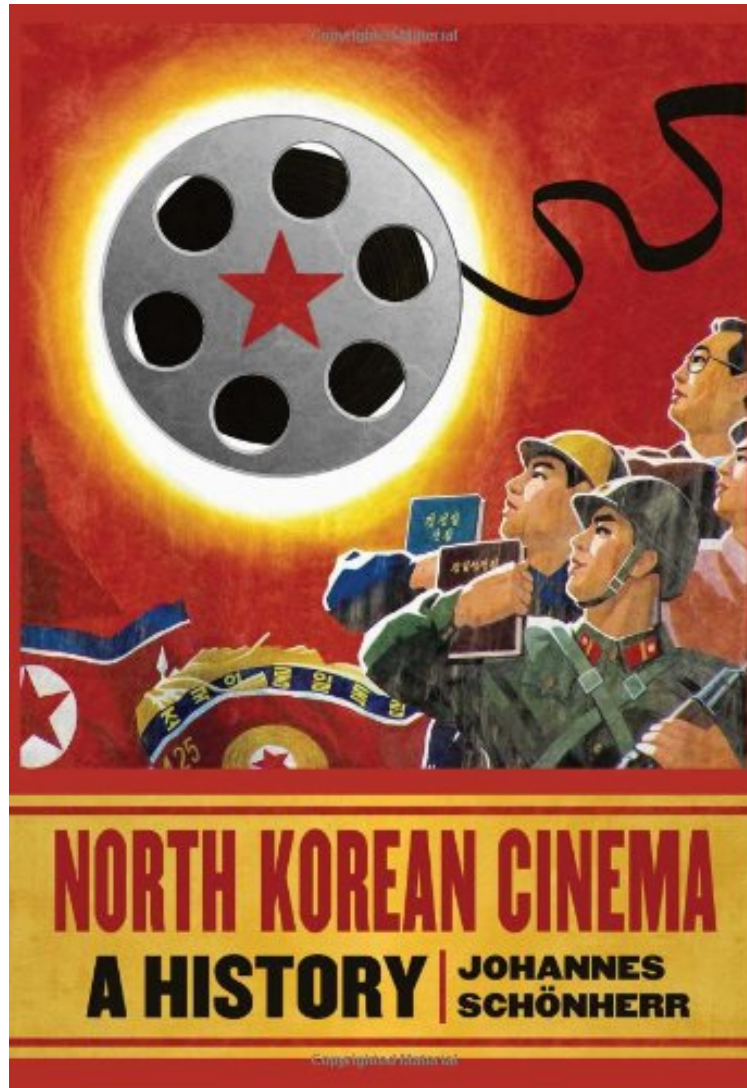


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North Korean Cinema: A History

Johannes Schonherr

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Johannes Schonherr : North Korean Cinema: A History before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised North Korean Cinema: A History:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Amazing, targeted at a very narrow audience By Piergiorgio Lambertini Scollo This book is an outstanding primer to understand NK cinema. It is major form of propaganda in the DPRK and no "foreign observer" (including amateurs such as myself) could do without it. There are a few shortcomings though. While the author's style is rather engaging, the topic itself is quite dull; most movies shot in Pyongyang are terrible and the themes are pretty much along the lines of cheap romantic comedies and pseudo-action movies where the Korean bloke defeats a bunch of imperialists. Still, if you read a lot of books about South Korea's

whacky Northern neighbour, this might just be a refreshing topic to find out more about. It is rather expensive though, so my advice is to purchase it if you're really interested in North Korean propaganda and art. 4 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Often snide but sometimes useful book on DPRK cinema by David Ecklein. First the good part (why 2 stars instead of one) - this includes an extensive, although still incomplete, listing of DPRK (North Korea) films - a list available nowhere else, to my knowledge. In particular, "A Traffic Controller At Crossroads" (2007), in my own collection of DPRK DVDs, is missing, and possibly many more. For the rest of it, I can only say that the usual outsider blindness to the history (and tragedy) of Korea seems evident in the snide and facetious commentary sprinkled throughout the book. At best, Mr. Schonherr reports found shiny objects that have landed in his western-oriented or South Korean sandbox. My advice is to see some of the actual films if and when possible, and go to more authoritative sources (such as the works of Bruce Cumings) for historical background. The DPRK films I have seen are more impressive than described by Mr. Schonherr.

Like many ideological dictatorships of the twentieth century, North Korea has always considered cinema an indispensable propaganda tool. No other medium penetrated the whole of the population so thoroughly, and no other medium remained so strictly and exclusively under state control. Through movies, the two successive leaders Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il propagandized their policies and sought to rally the masses behind them, with great success. This volume chronicles the history of North Korean cinema from its beginnings to today, examining the obstacles the film industry faced as well as the many social problems the films themselves reveal. It provides detailed analyses of major and minor films and explores important developments in the industry within the context of the concurrent social and political atmosphere. Through the lens of cinema emerges a fresh perspective on the history of North Korean politics, culture, and ideology.