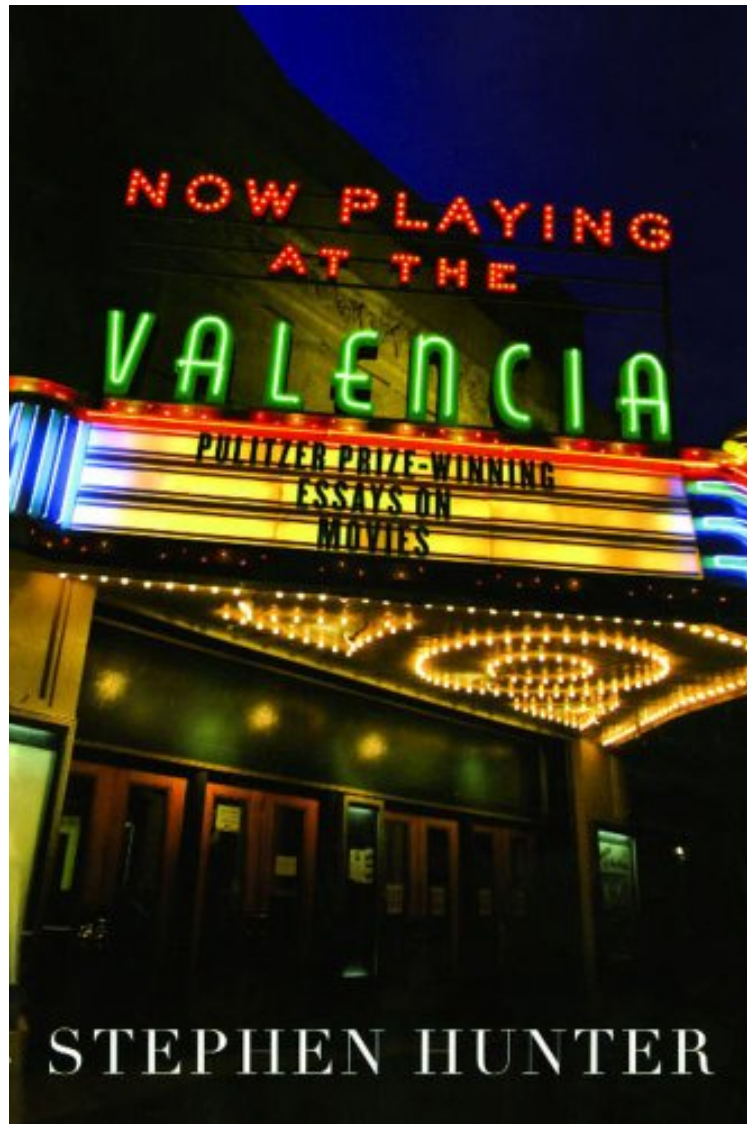


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Now Playing at the Valencia: Pulitzer Prize-Winning Essays on Movies

Stephen Hunter

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Stephen Hunter : Now Playing at the Valencia: Pulitzer Prize-Winning Essays on Movies before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Now Playing at the Valencia: Pulitzer Prize-Winning Essays on Movies:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This crop of yesterday's journalism is really worth it By E. VanBuren These are movie reviews, and, yes, they are very fine ones--written in an easy voice that manages to

maintain a casual tone while bouncing dynamically (and often hilariously) between the elevated diction of the most erudite poet and the goofy slang of the callowest teenager: they earned Hunter a Pulitzer. But that's not even what's so great about this book. His articulate explanations of a complex conservative point of view are among the most enlightening I have ever encountered. (I have been looking for years for a book that would help me understand what sort of value system would cause people I knew to be good and kindhearted to make political decisions so contrary to those that my instincts have always led me to choose (and I should have known that movies would serve as the only kinds of Rosetta Stones I could decipher).)0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very happy with one exceptionBy S. FukasawaI am a huge fan of the last themed anthology of reviews by Stephen Hunter, *Violent Screen*, and this is more of the same. Agree or disagree, he is a terrific writer and I love reading reviews on a wider variety of films. My one complaint, the layout does not separate movies by title. Sure there is an index in the back, but I'm not sure there are any more films reviewed in this book than *Violent Screen* and I thought that had the perfect arrangement which probably should have been replicated here. Or, at the very least put the movie title in bold at the lead of each review, this is the type of book I will pick up and skim from time to time, not read front to back.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Cinema popularoBy CustomerAs a syndicated film critic, I admire others like myself who write about movies out of a love of the cinema. Stephen Hunter is such a critic (as well as being a damn fine novelist) and this collection of his film writings was like buttered popcorn at a double feature, a pleasure. His insightful look at familiar films is a great way to spend a few hours when you've already seen everything playing at your local movie house. Four stars to Mr. Hunter.

From Pulitzer Prize-Winning Movie Critic Stephen Hunter Comes A Brilliant, Freewheeling, And Witty Look At The Movies. Evanston, Illinois, was an idyllic 1950s paradise with stately homes, a beautiful lake, a world-class university, two premier movie houses, and one very seedy movie theater -- the Valencia. This was the site of Washington Post film critic Stephen Hunter's misspent youth. Instead of going to school, picking up girls, or tossing a football, Hunter could be found sitting in the fifteenth row, right-hand aisle seat of the Valencia, sating himself on one B-list movie after another. The Valencia had a sticky floor, smelly bathrooms, ancient popcorn, and a screen set in a hideously tacky papier-mache castle wall. It was also the only place in town to see westerns, sci-fi pictures, cops 'n' robbers flicks, slapstick comedy, and *Godzilla*. In *Now Playing at the Valencia*, the author of such bestselling novels as *Havana* and *Pale Horse Coming* has compiled his favorite movie reviews written between 1997 and 2003, bringing to the discussion the passionate feelings for cinema he discovered in the '50s, a time when genres were forming, mesmerizing stars played unforgettable characters, and enduring classics were made. While filmmaking has changed tremendously since Hunter first frequented the Valencia, the view from the fifteenth row, and the thrill of down and dirty entertainment, has remained the same.

From Publishers WeeklyTransferring his boyhood passion for 1950s B-movies to today's digitized blockbusters, Washington Post critic Hunter celebrates Hollywood's great populist entertainments. He gathers his reviews of the last decade's worth of pictures, grouped by such genres as westerns, sci-fi and war movies. (A military buff, Hunter can identify the make and model of every filmic badass's automatic weapon and reliably tears up at the sight of a band of brothers holding out against hopeless odds.) A fiction writer, too, Hunter offers superb descriptions of imagery and atmosphere, the rush of action and the aura of actors, but his rapt openness to movies' dazzling phenomena sometimes overwhelms his discernment. To pick a schlockfest at random, his review of *Mission: Impossible 2* mixes evocative observations (dewy Thandie Newton is "an embryo floating in her little sac of nourishing fluid") with overstimulated blurb-mongering ("M:I-2 rocks so hard it rocks its way off the planet"). Some of the deadline-driven pieces are no deeper than a strip of celluloid, but others on Hollywood gunfights, say, or the worldview of conspiracy moviesthoughtfully probe the ideology of cinema. Written in a vigorous, demotic style, these essays are more fun than the films they discuss. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From BooklistWhen Pulitzer Prize-winning Washington Post critic Hunter was growing up in the 1950s, his tastes were shaped not in theaters that showed foreign films but in one that specialized in B movies. That accounts for the organization of his reviews by genre and for the straitjacket genre-mindedness puts on the book's coverage. More than most review collections, this one suffers from undue attention to movies that weren't worth the ink even when they were released. Does anyone still want to read about *Lethal Weapon 4* or *G.I. Jane*? Yet when Hunter tackles such worthwhile releases as *L.A. Confidential* and *Black Hawk Down*, and revived classics (e.g., *High Noon*, *The Third Man*), he does it with amusing verve and genuine acumen. Hunter acknowledges the limitations of the lowbrow, noting that *The Godfather* represents "the difference between a great genre film and a great film," but his love of plebeian pleasures seems to blind him to the rewards of more elevated fare. Gordon FlaggCopyright American Library Association. All rights reservedAbout the AuthorStephen Hunter has writteneighteen novels. The retired chief film critic for *The Washington Post*, where he won the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Distinguished Criticism, he has also published two collections of film criticism and a nonfiction work, *American Gunfight*. He lives in Baltimore,

Maryland.