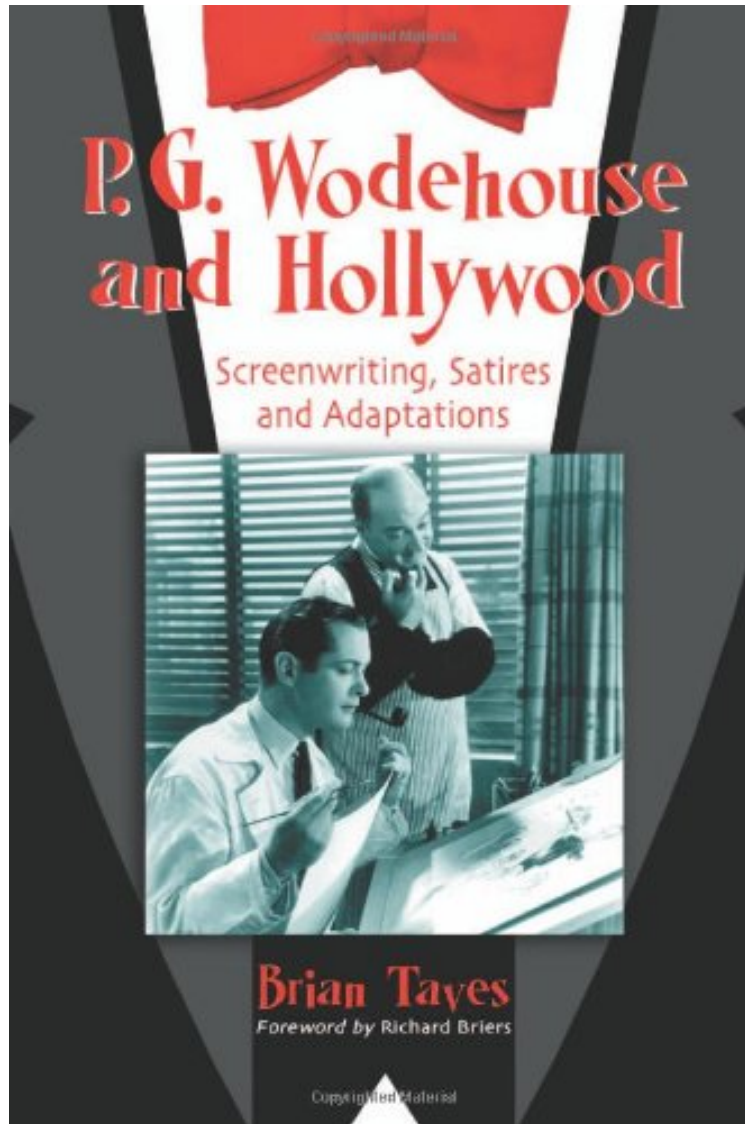


## P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood: Screenwriting, Satires and Adaptations

Brian Taves

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**Brian Taves : P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood: Screenwriting, Satires and Adaptations** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood: Screenwriting, Satires and Adaptations:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Not for the casual Wodehouse reader By PianoGuyFromSC If you're a die-hard fan of PGW (as I am), you'll definitely want to take a look at this book. It's an exhaustive study not only of

the work PGW did in Hollywood, but of ALL the film, TV, and even radio versions of his books made from the day of silent movies to the present. The casual reader will not find this riveting, and indeed, I expected a lot more considering the high price of this paperback. Over a third of the book is taken up with a detailed index, which may help grad students researching PGW but will be glossed over by everyone else. There were some interesting personal bits, but most of them were just quotes from PGW's own books about his experiences. There are also many photos of scenes from the movies described, and of ads for those movies, which were interesting. And the author does a good job of showing how PGW's Hollywood days were used as plots for his stories and novels. But in summary: PGW did very little in Hollywood that we can actually SEE on film, and most of the movies that others made from his books were terrible. Read his own autobiographical books first, and if you're still interested, try this one.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A Silver Screen Survey to Savor and Save By Elin WMLet's start off right away by saying I would bet money that nobody will ever write a more comprehensive review of Wodehouse on screen than Brian Taves has done. There may be the odd short film or TV adaptation he has missed, but I doubt it very much. Taves is sensible enough to widen the scope of his book well beyond Hollywood. In fact, the book covers not only Wodehouse's work in Hollywood but the many versions of his stories on the screen and on television, from the early silents up to *Piccadilly Jim* in 2005. Taves starts his book with a review of Wodehouse's early career and tells of the first Wodehouse stories to appear on the screen: *A Gentleman of Leisure* in 1915, followed shortly afterwards by *Rule Sixty-Three*. Other short films followed; as Taves says, these no longer exist, but he lists the 10 silent films that were made and makes the important point that Hollywood was content then to use the plots as Wodehouse wrote them. Only later did the studios insist on "improving" them. I had no idea that "silent" Hollywood had given us *Uneasy Money* (1918), *A Damsel in Distress* (1919), *The Prince and Betty* (1919), *Piccadilly Jim* (1919), *Their Mutual Child* (1920), and *A Gentleman of Leisure* (again; 1923) as well as *Sally* (1925) and *The Small Bachelor* (1927). I have, however, been fortunate enough to have seen the British-made *Clicking of Cuthbert* series (1924). Taves, quite properly, deals with Wodehouse's stage successes and Hollywood's subsequent attempts to put these on screen, though I suggest the silent screen versions of such shows as *Oh, Boy!* and *Sally* can never have had the appeal of the original stage shows. Nevertheless, Taves tells us about them and leads us into Wodehouse's two periods working in Hollywood, making it clear how he and the studios marched to a different drum. He tells of the projects given to Wodehouse and what happened to them, and he describes the films based on Wodehouse's stories that were made elsewhere. He covers the wartime period well and brings a practical point of view to the contract that Wodehouse signed with a German film company. Possibly because I first saw Wodehouse on television, I found Taves's Chapter VII the most interesting. It deals with the TV adaptations of the 1960s and the various series made by Ian Carmichael and Dennis Price as Bertie and Jeeves, by Anton Rodgers playing a superb Ukridge, and by Ralph Richardson as Lord Emsworth. It still boggles the imagination how the BBC could have destroyed all their tapes of these excellent series, but they did. Taves gives high praise to Hugh Laurie's Bertie Wooster, and I think he is right. Laurie is the only actor I have seen whose face could mirror Bertie's shock, horror, hopelessness in two seconds, followed by the three seconds of dawning optimism as Jeeves reassures him that all is not lost. Taves also makes the important point that both Laurie and Stephen Fry knew and admired Wodehouse's writing and tried to play the parts as they felt Wodehouse would have wanted. I may have missed it in Taves's book, but I think he omitted one aspect--albeit a very minor one. There have been many excellent adaptations of Wodehouse's full-length novels, enjoyable versions that followed the script faithfully--especially when they were made at Sudeley Castle with Richard Briers as Gally--but there is always something missing. I don't know what it is and I certainly cannot fault the actors. Perhaps I have built up too definite a picture of the story in my own mind. Perhaps it is because the full-length novels are too complex; I don't know. Conversely, I firmly believe that Wodehouse short stories make perfect television. There is less time--or need--to develop the characters and they can be played "straight" and still get over every Wodehousean aspect. There is no background or scene-setting to be done; just saying the lines Wodehouse wrote and doing the actions he describes gives you the Wodehouse story. That is why I believe the John Alderton and Pauline Collins series of short half-hour versions of the Mulliner stories (1975 1976) are the "nearest to Wodehouse" versions I have seen on screen. But that is a matter of personal opinion and I know many others take a different view. If Taves missed commenting on this, he certainly hasn't missed anything else, and his 50-page filmography completes a scholarly and definitive review of Wodehouse on the cinema and TV screen. My husband, also a Wodehouse expert, wishes Taves had written it earlier because it has lots of information my husband could have made use of in his own literary efforts.

Beloved British humorist P.G. Wodehouse produced a wealth of literature in his lengthy career, contributing novels, short stories, plays, lyrics and essays to the canon of comic writing. His work in film and television included two stints as a screenwriter in Hollywood in the 1930s, and his stories have been the basis for more than 150 film and television productions. He also wrote 20 stories and essays about Hollywood, satirizing the city and its entertainment magnates. This book studies P.G. Wodehouse's extensive, but often overlooked relationship with Tinsel Town. The book is arranged chronologically, covering Wodehouse's Hollywood career from his early efforts in silent film, to his later contributions in television, to his work adapted posthumously for the screen. Radio is covered as well, including a

discussion of his internment in occupied France and his brief appearances on German radio. Reflecting Wodehouse's international appeal, the book covers Wodehouse films and television in England, Germany, Sweden, and India. Also included are a comprehensive, detailed list of Wodehouse's stories and articles about Hollywood, and a complete filmography of motion picture and television works to which he contributed or which were based on his stories.

"Comprehensive and thoroughly researched." --Film Quarterly  
"Recommend[ed]...thorough." --Wooster  
Sauce  
"Scholarly...definitive." --Plum Lines  
About the Author  
Brian Taves is the author of six books and over 60 articles on popular culture and media. A film archivist for the Library of Congress, he lives in Culpeper, Virginia.