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Projecting Tomorrow: Science Fiction and Popular Cinema (Cinema and Society (Paperback))

James Chapman, Nicholas J. Cull
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#1640232 in Books I. B. Tauris 2013-02-05 Original language: English PDF # 1 11.02 x .84 x 6.351, .95 #File Name: 1780764103272 pages | File size: 71.Mb

James Chapman, Nicholas J. Cull : Projecting Tomorrow: Science Fiction and Popular Cinema (Cinema and Society (Paperback)) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Projecting Tomorrow: Science Fiction and Popular Cinema (Cinema and Society (Paperback)):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The Future of Science Fiction StudiesBy DFSThe first thing to be

said regarding Chapman and Cull's new book, *Projecting Tomorrow* is that it is pleasure to read; in an appealing, clear and witty style, Chapman and Cull analyze twelve key science fiction films in order to trace the evolution of the genre from David Butler's *Just Imagine* (1930) all the way to James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009). The result is both entertaining and highly instructive, as Chapman and Cull shed light not only upon the conditions of production of each film, i.e., their respective historical and cinematic contexts, but present as well their socio-cultural implications and semiotic contents, smoothly shifting from contextual to textual description and interpretation. While the introduction justifies the corpus of study underlining the merits of the selected films, the afterword introduces the new cultural trends that inform the study of science fiction cinema at large, observing in particular an increasing independence of the medium vis--vis its traditional sources of inspiration, such as novels, plays, novellas and short stories, suggesting hence that cinema is more than ever in the process of articulating itself as a complete culturally and artistically significant narrative vehicle. *Projecting Tomorrow* is an important work for several reasons; first, it represents a direct and fundamental contribution to the on-going elaboration of a popular cultural canon, for it allows us to perceive the merits of traditionally frowned upon cultural narrative products, such as science fiction films, and their influence not only on our society but also on the manner in which we understand our reality. Secondly, from a theoretical point of view, Chapman and Cull's book is nothing short than exemplary: as cultural studies are plagued by over-conceptualized jargon and often exhibit a definite disdain towards primary sources, which more often than not serve as mere pretexts to promote pre-existing ideological agendas, *Projecting Tomorrow*, on the contrary, is firmly grounded upon empirical data and leaves no room for idle, theoretically esoteric speculations. This is not to say that Chapman and Cull are not theoretically informed, far from it, but rather that their approach privileges the primary sources and remains within the scope of their study, which makes *Projecting Tomorrow* much more informative and convincing than many current postmodern, stylistically challenged essays on popular culture. Chapman and Cull are not only teaching us about how we projected tomorrow through twelve key science fiction films: they are themselves projecting what the future of cinema and cultural studies ought to be.

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A nice aspect of this book is that it not only ...By Michael Samerdyke I read this book because I met one of the authors (Nicholas Cull) several years ago and was very impressed with him. "Projecting Tomorrow" turned out to be a very interesting book. It gives us case studies of how science fiction films came to be made and looks at how they were received. In other words, this book looks more at the paper trail these movies generated than at the films themselves. A nice aspect of this book is that it not only looks at famous films, such as "Forbidden Planet" and "Star Wars," but at obscure films such as "Just Imagine" and "The Hellstrom Chronicles." While two authors wrote this book, I have to say that if they hadn't said in the introduction that "Author A wrote these chapters and Author B wrote these," I would not have been able to tell the difference. I found out things I didn't know when I read "Projecting Tomorrow," and that is very high praise. If you like science fiction films, this book is a must.

Cinema and science fiction were made for each other. The science fiction genre has produced some of the most extraordinary films ever made, yet science fiction cinema is about more than just special effects. It has also provided a vehicle for filmmakers and writers to comment on their own societies and cultures. This new exploration of the genre examines landmark science fiction films from the 1930s to the present. They include genre classics such as *Things to Come*, *Forbidden Planet* and *2001: A Space Odyssey* alongside modern blockbusters *Star Wars* and *Avatar*. Chapman and Cull consider both screen originals and adaptations of the work of major science fiction authors. They also range widely across the genre from pulp adventure and space opera to political allegory and speculative documentary there is even a science fiction musical. Informed throughout by extensive research in US and British archives, the book documents the production histories of each film to show how they made their way to the screen and why they turned out the way they did.

'I very much enjoyed the background that Chapman and Cull produced on these films. I managed to learn something new in every chapter. The authors did a masterful job in the selection of examples- a mix of the essential and the surprising- which nevertheless manage to cover many of the key periods in the genre's evolution on the screen. They make a strong case for why SF films need to be considered in their own right, and not simply as an extension of the literary version of the genre. All told, I suspect this book is going to be well received by fans and academics alike.'

Henry Jenkins, co-author, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. About the Author James Chapman is Professor of Film Studies at the University of Leicester, UK. His previous books include *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda, 1939-1945* (1998), and *Licence To Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films* (2nd edn 2007), both from I.B.Tauris. He is editor of the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*. Nicholas J. Cull is Professor of Public Diplomacy in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. His previous books include *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (2008) and (with James Chapman), *Projecting Empire: Imperialism and Popular Cinema* (I.B.Tauris, 2009). He is president of the International

