

Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II (Film and Culture)

Thomas Doherty

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#2256338 in Books 1993-12 Original language: English PDF # 1 1.24 x 6.23 x 9.281, #File Name: 0231082444364 pages | File size: 64.Mb

Thomas Doherty : Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II (Film and Culture) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II (Film and Culture):

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In this cultural history of the USA during World War II, Thomas Doherty examines the interaction between Hollywood cinema and America's involvement in the war. He reveals how and why Hollywood marshalled its artistic resources on behalf of the war effort, giving a voice to many different groups' viewpoints: the motion picture industry itself; government agencies; and audiences at home and overseas. Doherty proves that war-time Hollywood was not a rigidly controlled propaganda machine, as is often assumed, but an ad-hoc collaborative effort between the government and the film industry. He explains the social, political and economic forces that created genre classics such as "Mrs Miniver" and "Air Force" as well as comedies, musicals, newsreels, documentaries, cartoons and army training films.

From Publishers Weekly Doherty (Teenagers and Teenpics) analyzes the WW II alliance between Hollywood and Washington, an unprecedented partnership that generated new kinds of films. He explains why General George C. Marshall, the Army chief of staff, gave movies a high priority in maintaining troop morale, and how directors such as John Ford, Frank Capra and John Huston employed their artistry in orientation/training films and combat documentaries. Doherty traces Hollywood's transition from a producer of peacetime entertainment to a supplier of homefront melodramas, wartime comedies and martial musicals that were "information-heavy and value-laden." Characterizing the motion-picture industry as "the foremost purveyor and chief custodian of the images and myths of 1941-45," he describes the changing perceptions reflected in Hollywood movies with regard to the war effort, the enemy, death in battle and other subject of wartime concern. Doherty's penetrating study conveys the extraordinary impact and cultural power of American movies during World War II and, to a lesser degree, during the Korean and Vietnam wars. Photos. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Superlatives apply to this analysis of how World War II affected the American movie industry and how Hollywood's ensuing films influenced both wartime and postwar audiences. Doherty (American Studies, Brandeis Univ.), who is associate editor of Cineaste, evaluates commercial features about war and the homefront, documentaries, Nazi propaganda films, battle footage, and the presentation of black and Japanese American soldiers. A final chapter discusses how succeeding generations viewed war and war films, surveying movies about Korea and Vietnam. Also included are notes and an appendix of the most popular Hollywood films from 1941 to 1945. This engrossing and superbly written book is difficult to put down. Recommended for most libraries. - Kim Holston, American Inst. for Chartered Property Casualty Underwriters, Malvern, Pa. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus s More than any other event, WW II transformed the relationship between Hollywood and American culture, Doherty (American Studies/Brandeis) announces at the outset of this uncommonly wide-ranging social history--and proceeds to support his argument with surprising success. Before the war, argues Doherty (Teenagers and Teenpics, 1988--not reviewed), the contract between Hollywood and its audience stipulated a myth of "pure entertainment" in which formulaic genres and happy endings reigned supreme. But the contradictory imperatives posed by the war--Hollywood features for the audience back home had to be upliftingly escapist yet honest in their acknowledgment of wartime stresses; film coverage of combat had to be unflinching yet supportive; presentations of women had to emphasize their success in adapting their femininity to heretofore masculine tasks--rewrote that contract in a profoundly equivocal way. With the help of extensive research in studio archives and dozens of illustrative anecdotes, Doherty is especially incisive in showing the transition from the pacifism universally prescribed for WW I movies to the gung-ho partisanship for WW II. He also excels in using Hollywood movies as cloudy mirrors for such social problems as racial injustice, Japanese internment, and the "properly directed hatred" that called for fine calculations in distinguishing shifting degrees of hostility toward Germans, Italians, and Japanese as the prewar Hollywood "tradition of quality"--exemplified by David Selznick's literary adaptations--inched toward the postwar "issue-oriented stance of Walter Wanger, Stanley Kramer, and Dore Schary." Despite the occasional minor blemish (Herblock, not Bill Mauldin, is identified as the creator of cartoon dogfaces Willie and Joe), the scholarship is both sound and unobtrusive. Though Doherty occasionally loses sight of his largest argument in the middle of detailing Jimmy Stewart's war record, this is a model social history of war movies--both a penetrating examination of Hollywood at war and a bracing argument about the effects of the war on the nature of Hollywood entertainment. (Seventy photographs) -- Copyright 1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.