



Gangsters

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Gangsters

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16+ MEDIA STUDIES

INFORMATION GUIDE STATEMENT

“Candidates should note that examiners have copies of this guide and will not give credit for mere reproduction of the information it contains. Candidates are reminded that all research sources must be credited”.

ACCESSING RESEARCH MATERIALS

1. *bfi* NATIONAL LIBRARY:

All the materials referred to in this guide are available for consultation at the *bfi* National Library. If you wish to visit the reading room of the library and do not already hold membership, you will need to take out a day, annual or weekly pass. Full details of access to the library and charges can be found at www.bfi.org.uk/library.

bfi NATIONAL LIBRARY READING ROOM OPENING HOURS

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Thursday	10.30am - 8.00pm
Friday	10.30am - 5.30pm

If you are visiting the library from a distance or are planning to visit as a group, it is advisable to contact the Reading Room librarian in advance (tel. 020 7957 4824, or email library@bfi.org.uk).

***bfi* National Library**

British Film Institute
21 Stephen Street
London W1T 1LN
Tel. 020 7255 1444
www.bfi.org.uk/library

The library's nearest underground stations are Tottenham Court Road and Goodge Street (please see www.bfi.org.uk/nationallibrary/visiting for a map of the area).

COPIES OF ARTICLES

If you are unable to visit the library or would like materials referred to in this guide sent to you, the *bfi* Information Service can supply copies of articles via its Research Services. Research is charged at a range of hourly rates, with a minimum charge for half an hour's research – full details of services and charges can be found at www.bfi.org.uk/library/services/research.html.

For queries about article copying or other research, please contact **Information Services** at the above address or tel. no. or post your enquiry online at www.bfi.org.uk/ask.

2. OTHER SOURCES:

- Your local library

Local libraries should have access to the inter-library loan system for requesting items they do not hold and they may have copies of MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN and SIGHT AND SOUND. Some recent newspaper items may be held by your local reference library.

- Your nearest college/university

Universities may allow access to outside students, though it is unlikely that you will be able to borrow books or journals. Ask your reference librarian, who should be able to assist by locating the nearest college library holding suitable material.

- Your school library

- Local bookshops

Some of the books mentioned in the bibliography are still in print and your bookshop should be able to order items for you.

- The British Library Newspaper Library

The Newspaper Library will have all the newspaper items referred to in this guide. Contact the library first if you wish to visit. 16+ students under the age of 18 will need to make an appointment.

The British Library Newspaper Library
Colindale Avenue
London NW9 5HE
Tel. 020 7412 7353
Tel. 020 7412 7353

Why do research?

You cannot simply rely on your existing knowledge when approaching essays in Media Studies. Although you will have some understanding of the area being explored, it is not enough to enable you to examine the area in depth. If you were asked to write about the people in your street in detail, you might have some existing information about names, faces, relationships, issues and activities but this knowledge would not offer you details such as every single one of their names, who knows who, who gets on with whom, how people earn a living, what has happened to them in the past and so on. This extra information could change your opinions quite dramatically. Without it, therefore, your written profile would end up being quite shallow and possibly incorrect. The same is true of your understanding of media texts, issues and institutions.

Before researching any area, it is useful to be clear about what outcomes you are hoping to achieve. Research is never a waste of time, even when it doesn't directly relate to the essay you are preparing. The information may be relevant to another area of the syllabus, be it practical work or simply a different essay. Also, the picture you are building up of how an area works will strengthen your understanding of the subject as a whole. So what outcomes are you hoping to achieve with your research?

- **A broad overview of the area you are researching:** This includes its history, institutions, conventions and relationship to the audience. Research into these aspects offers you an understanding of how your area has developed and the influences which have shaped it.
- **An awareness of different debates which may exist around the area of study:** There are a range of debates in many subject areas. For example, when researching audiences you will discover that there is some debate over how audiences watch television or film, ranging from the passive consumption of values and ideas to the use of media texts in a critical and independent way. Any discussion about censorship, for example, and an analysis of the debates which emerged over the release of the film "Crash", will be extremely shallow if you have no knowledge of these different perspectives.
- **Some knowledge of the work of theorists in that particular area:** You need to demonstrate that you have read different theorists, exploring the relevant issues and investigating the area thoroughly in order to develop your own opinion based on acquired knowledge and understanding.
- **Information relevant to all key concept areas.** You should, after research, be able to discuss all key concept areas as they relate to that specific subject area. These are the codes and conventions, representation, institutions and audience.

Types of research

- **Primary:** This is first-hand research. In other words, it relies on you constructing and conducting surveys, setting up interviews with key people in the media industry or keeping a diary or log of data (known as quantitative information) on such things as what activities women are shown doing in advertisements over one week of television viewing, for example. Unless you are equipped to conduct extensive research, have access to relevant people in the media industry or are thorough in the up-keep of your diary or log, this type of research can be demanding, complex and sometimes difficult to use. Having said that, if you are preparing for an extended essay, then it is exactly this type of research which, if well used, will make your work distinctive and impressive.

- **Secondary:** This is where you will be investigating information gathered by other people in books, pamphlets, on radio, television, in the newspaper and in magazines. All of these sources are excellent for finding background information, statistics, interviews, collected research details and so on. This will form the majority of your research. Some of these will be generally available (in public libraries for example); others such as press releases and trade press may only be available through specialist libraries.
- **Other Media:** When considering one area of the media or one particular product or type of product, it is very important that you compare it with others which are similar. You will need to be able to refer to these comparisons in some detail so it is not enough to simply watch a film. You will need to read a little about that film, make notes, concentrate on one or two scenes which seem particularly relevant and write all of this information up so that you can refer to it when you need to.
- **History and development:** Having an understanding of the history and development of the media text which you are researching will provide a firm foundation and context for contemporary analysis. There is a difference between generally accepted facts and how theorists use these facts.
- **Theory:** This is the body of work of other critics of the media. Most of the books and periodical articles which you will read for research will be written by theorists who are arguing a particular viewpoint or position with regard to an issue within the media. It is this which forms the debates surrounding the study of the media, in which you, as a media student, are now becoming involved.

Using research

- **Organising your research:** Before rushing headlong into the local library, the first stage of research is to plan two things. When are you able to do your research and how are you going to organise the information gathered? You may, for example, wish to make notes under the headings listed above.
- **Applying your research:** Always return to the specific questions being asked of the text. The most obvious pitfall is to gather up all of the collected information and throw it at the page, hoping to score points for quantity. The art of good research is how you use it as part of or evidence for an analysis of the text which you are exploring. The knowledge you have acquired should give you the confidence to explore the text, offer your own arguments and, where appropriate, to quote references to support this.
- **Listing your research:** It is good practice, and excellent evidence of your wider reading, to list all references to secondary research, whether mentioned within the essay or not, at the end of your work. This is usually written in this way:

Notes

1. Len Masterman, *Teaching About Television*, London, Macmillan, 1980.

2. Manuel Alvarado and Bob Ferguson, "The Curriculum, Media Studies and Discursivity", *Screen*, vol.24, no.3, May-June 1983.

Other media texts referred to in detail should be listed, with relevant information such as the director, date of release or transmission, production company and, where possible, scene or episode number.

Where you have compiled primary research, it is useful to offer a brief summary of this also at the end of your work.

As with all of the Student Packs produced by the *bfi* National Library, this guide is not intended as an exhaustive or definitive account of the gangster film. Far more than the Western (with which it is often compared in genre studies), it is notoriously difficult to say what exactly constitutes a “gangster film” or whether it can be called a “genre” in its own right. Clearly, the gangster film is a subset of the wider “crime film” which includes criminals, crimes, victims, and agents of law and order, but if we call a “gangster film” any film with a gangster in it, we have to include not only ‘classic’ gangster films but film noirs, detective stories, crime melodramas, historical reconstructions, and even comedies. Colin McArthur’s **Underworld USA** (1972) was the first systematic attempt to define the “gangster genre” in terms of iconography (the dress code of gangsters, their cars and guns, and the role of the city itself) in order to group films across a range of phases or cycles, but defining a gangster film by its essential components can be problematic – for example, is *BONNIE AND CLYDE* less of a gangster film because it does not take place in the city?

As outlined in Pam Cook’s **The Cinema Book** (p173-9), Robert Warshow’s 1970 essay, ‘The Gangster as Tragic Hero’ (in **The Immediate Experience**) was the first serious attempt to deal with the aesthetic and ideological significances of the gangster film, which had previously been discussed largely in terms of its historical phases or in relation to censorship. For Warshow, the gangster represents the “urban nightmare” which is the flip side of the American Dream, his rise-and (inevitable)-fall trajectory a reflection of the inherent contradictions of capitalism itself. As Jack Shadoian described it in his 1977 study, **Dreams and Dead Ends**, the gangster is “a creature who wants” and his struggle is that of “basic human needs in opposition to a world that denies them.” The gangster wants the same as the rest of society (material and romantic success, power and respect) but wants them *more*, resorting to (criminal) means that place him outside of, and in opposition to, wider society. This explains why the gangster has remained such a subversive figure in popular culture but also why, in spite of his huge popularity in the popular imagination, the gangster must always meet his come-uppance in the final reel.

This current collection begins with a broad survey of books and journal articles available in the *bfi* National Library that refer in detail to the gangster figure in film and television. Beyond this, a selection of sub-topics have been included with an aim to covering a diverse spectrum of gangster-related issues: the historical evolution of the gangster (the Warner Brothers gangster films of the 1930s; key US film texts of the 1970s-1990s); cross-cultural comparisons (the British gangster film from *BRIGHTON ROCK* to *LOCK, STOCK*; the Japanese *yakuza* film); race (US black gangsters as depicted in ‘Hood’ films of the 1980s-90s) and television (*THE SOPRANOS*). These topics have also been chosen with an eye to the availability of materials for students and teachers, their perceived popularity as subjects for study, and the partialities of the authors themselves, but we hope that there will be something of interest for every student researching aspects of the gangster in popular film and television.

Researchers may also find the following Information Packs useful:

Tarantino (RESERVOIR DOGS, PULP FICTION)

Boyz N the Hood

Modern Noir (incl. MILLER’S CROSSING)

General References

compiled by Ayesha Khan

Books

BOOKBINDER, Robert

Classics of the gangster film.

Citadel Press, 1985. 265p. illus.

For anyone new to studying gangster films, this book is an excellent starting point. Essentially a filmography of the fifty most well-known US gangster films, starting with LITTLE CAESAR and ending with Brian De Palma's version of SCARFACE in 1983. The entry for each film includes limited cast and credit details, some background information and a synopsis. While there isn't much in terms of analysing the genre or each film, this book is still a useful reference guide.

BRODE, Douglas

Money, women and guns: crime movies from Bonnie and Clyde to the present.

Carol, 1995. 245p. illus.

Dealing with the second-cycle of American crime films from BONNIE AND CLYDE through to NATURAL BORN KILLERS, this book covers not only crime dramas but comedies such as MARRIED TO THE MOB as well. Brode starts this book by noting that recent crime classics might not have been made had it not been for French filmmakers such as Jean Luc Godard reviving the genre. Brode believes that this led to the genre becoming more self-referential, harking back to the heyday of the 1930's gangster films, but without the same restrictions on sex and violence that their predecessors had. There is a limited listing of cast and credits for each film featured.

CAMERON, Ian

A pictorial history of crime films.

Hamlyn, 1975. 221p. illus. index.

Covering the classic American crime films from the 1930's to the 1970's, the chapters of this book are divided by topics such as: Crime and Punishment, Violence, criminals and The Organisation. Within these topics Cameron focuses on particular films and the core narratives that can be found in the genre e.g. an innocent caught up with bad people, the tough detective and, of course, the gangsters. Cameron also aims to link the films to the concerns of the contemporary audience watching at the time. While a potentially useful book, its structure makes it difficult to study a particular film without referring to the index.

CLARENS, Carlos

Crime movies: an illustrated history – from Griffith to the The Godfather and beyond.

Secker and Warburg, 1980. 351p. illus. bibliog. index.

This excellent and exhaustive book examines the gangster movie genre from the silent era onwards. Claren's notes how the success of these films in the early part of the Twentieth century matched public anxiety over the films real-life counterparts, while at the same time mythologizing them. The introduction to this book is both clear and insightful, asking such questions as what makes a crime film, and examining how the genre has changed over time. The only problem with this book is that it was written in 1980 and therefore before the genre was regenerated by Quentin Tarantino et al.

COOK, Pam and BENINK, Mieke

The cinema book (2nd ed.)

British Film Institute, 1999. vii-x, 406p. illus. bibliog. index.

The cinema book's heavily theoretical approach, means that much scope is given to discussing the ideas of Robert Warshaw and Colin McArthur, covering the concepts of the genre rather than the films themselves (though there are some critiques). Offers a strongly academic perspective to the subject.

FORMAN, Henry J.

Our movie made children.

Macmillan, 1935. x, 288p.

Written in 1935, Forman looks at the psychological damage done to children through watching unsuitable films. Though concerns such as Forman's are still prevalent these days, Forman's means of expression will seem quaint and misguided to modern readers. The effect of gangster and crime films on children is, of course, condemned by Forman.

GABREE, John

Gangsters: from Little Caesar to The Godfather.

Galahad Books, 1973. 156p. illus. bibliog. filmog. index.

Though this book is nearly thirty-three years old, it is still worth referring to. It concisely outlines all the elements that made-up the early Warner Brothers gangster films and highlights some of the real-life gangsters whom the films were based on. Gabree then looks at gangster films, decade by decade, ending in the 1970's with The Godfather and blaxploitation films.

GEHRING, Wes D.

Handbook of American film genres.

Greenwood Press, 1988. 405p. bibliogs. filmogs. index

Raeburn's chapter on gangster films gives a good overview of the genre, but very little detail. There is a bibliography at the end.

GRANT, Barry Keith (ed.)

Film genre reader II.

University of Texas Press, 1995. 381p. illus. bibliog. index.

Features a chapter by Edward Mitchell about gangster films entitled 'Apes and essences'. In his essay, Mitchell argues that in the study of the genre, social patterns that give genre significance have been ignored. For Mitchell, this includes the concept of a social Darwinism. As can be guessed, this is a rather convoluted chapter that needs persevering with to be understood. There is also a chapter on Black gangster films by Mark A. Reid that takes a more straightforward and comprehensive approach to the subject.

HARDY, Phil

The Aurum film encyclopedia: gangsters.

Aurum, 1998. 512p. illus. appendices.

This encyclopedia comprehensively catalogues all aspects of the gangster genre from the 1920's through to the 1990's. In a year-by-year breakdown, Hardy lists the full range of the gangster genre, so that not only are dramas listed, but also comedies and musicals (e.g. WEST SIDE STORY). This includes cast and credit details and a synopsis. There are also entries for many of the key directors within the genre, including Coppola and Tarantino. What makes this book stand out is that not only does it not restrict its scope to either just America or Europe, but also there are useful statistics in the back as part of the appendices which highlight the most popular gangster films rented on video and a listing of gangster films which have won Oscar's.

HARDY, Phil

The BFI companion to crime.

Cassell/British Film Institute, 1997. 352p. illus.

This guide encompasses all the different strands in crime films including the gangsters. In alphabetical order, there is a listing of films, personalities and key topics used within the genre. A good quick reference guide.

HOSSENT, Harry

Gangster movies: gangsters, hoodlums and tough guys of the screen.

Octopus Books, 1974. 160p. illus. plates. index.

While this appears to be, primarily, a picture book, it still has some useful things to say about gangster films. Though the focus is on American films, both BRIGHTON ROCK and GET CARTER get a mention. The book is divided into topics rather than by film. This book is particularly useful when looking for actors who have made notable appearances in gangster films.

JENKINS, Steve

The death of a gangster.

BFI Education, 1982. 71p. bibliog.

This study guide was originally produced in conjunction with an accompanying video compilation. However, even without the video this is still a useful publication. It focuses on the films HIGH SIERRA, PORTRAIT OF A MOBSTER, PUBLIC ENEMY, THE RISE AND FALL OF LEGS DIAMOND, THE ROARING TWENTIES, LE SAMOURAI, THE ST VALENTINES DAY MASSACRE, UNDERWORLD USA and LITTLE CAESAR. The book starts with detailed credits and synopsis for each film. Part two, contains an essay examining the conventions of the gangster films, that manages to summarise authoritatively a number of issues surrounding the genre, including: gangsters as social ciphers, violence and female stereotypes. This is then followed by a detailed analysis of each script extract accompanied by contemporary reviews.

KAMINSKY, Stuart M.

American film genres (2nd ed.).

Nelson-Hall, 1985. 238p. illus. bibliogs. index.

The chapter on gangster films focuses on LITTLE CAESAR as the prototype in which the elements audiences now associate with the gangster genre were first clearly depicted. This has a structured approach to the topic that covers all elements of the gangster genre and includes a bibliography and a useful listing of key films from the genre.

KARPF, Stephen Louis

The gangster film: emergence, variation and decay of a genre 1930-1940.

Arno press, 1973. 299p. bibliog. filmog.

Karpf's dissertation examines the Warner Brothers cycle of gangster films made in the 1930's, its emergence, popularity, and eventual decline. The author pays close attention to LITTLE CAESAR, PUBLIC ENEMY, SCARFACE and THE PETRIFIED FOREST. Amongst other things Karpf discusses the qualities of each film and the actors and their characterisations. This is essential reading for anyone studying or researching the Warner Brothers gangster films.

LEE, Raymond and **VAN HEAKE**, B. C.

Gangsters and hoodlums: the underworld in the cinema.

A S. Barnes, 1971. 264p. illus.

This book is only useful if you are trying to find visual material, as it is made up mainly of film stills and posters. Includes a foreword by Edward G. Robinson.

LEITCH, Thomas

Crime films.

Cambridge University Press, 2002. xi-xv, 383p. illus. filmog. index.

This comprehensive overview of crime films analyses the sub-genres of the crime films (including the gangster films) and aims to show how the films and audience relationships to them have changed over time. Starting with a 'Historical and cultural overview', Leitch then moves on to each genre in turn. For the chapter on gangsters 'The Godfather and the gangster film', Leitch uses THE GODFATHER as a case study to underline the idea of the gangster films basis in the identification and conformity to certain social rules. This book uses many relevant and useful examples from a wide range of gangster films to make its points.

MANCHEL, Frank

Gangsters on the screen.

Franklin Watts, 1978. 120p. illus. bibliog. index.

Published in 1978 and not very detailed, this book provides a well-written and comprehensive guide to US gangster films and TV programmes from 1898 – 1978. As well as the films and the programmes, Manchel also looks at some of the issues surrounding the genre. True-life events that inspired the films and the controversies over violent content of the films and programmes are well covered.

MCARTHUR, Colin

Underworld USA.

Secker and Warburg, 1972. 176p. illus. index.

This book is an essential text. While over thirty years old, its theoretical examination of the gangster genre provides a useful perspective; looking firstly at various themes such as genre, iconography, development and background to the subject. The book then moves on to look at the films of individual directors, including Fritz Lang, John Huston and Nicholas Ray. McArthur's work is still considered one of the cornerstones in the study of the genre.

MCCARTEY, John

Hollywood gangland: the movies' love affair with the mob.

St Martin's Press, 1993. 269p. filmog. bibliog. index.

Focusing primarily on Hollywood gangster films from the 1920's to the 1970's, this book gives a good, if at times critical, account of the enduring popularity of gangster films in the US. This book also mentions other sub-genre topics such as the Yakuza and the 'gangsta' films of the 80's/90's.

MOTTRAM, James

Public enemies: the gangster movie A-Z.

B. T. Batsford, 1998. 192p. illus. chronol. bibliog.

This book provides a listing of the most well known gangster films from all over the World. A good reference guide that engages the reader to enquire about films they might not have otherwise been interested in.

MUNBY, Jonathan

Public enemies, public heroes: screening the gangster from Little Caesar to Touch of Evil.

The University of Chicago, 1999. vii-xii, 263p. illus. appendix. bibliog. indices.

One of the few theoretical studies of gangster films that isn't just a guide to the films. Munby links the gangster films of the 1930's with the noir films of the 1940's and how both are representative of America's changing social history in the Twentieth century. Focusing specifically from the Depression era to the start of the Cold War, Munby discusses how authority figures viewed gangster films as "transgressive" and subversive and how subsequent efforts to contain and censor them were resisted. An essential book for anyone aiming to study the US gangster films from the 1930's/40's in greater depth.

NEALE, Steve

Genre and Hollywood.

Routledge, 2000. vii-viii, 336p. appendix, bibliog. index.

Neale's section on gangster films is brief, but detailed survey of the literature written on the subject, followed by a history of the genres development.

PARISH, James Robert and PITTS, Michael R.

The great gangster pictures I.

Scarecrow Press, 1976. 431p. plates. filmog.

Filmography aiming to list all American produced gangster films. There is a useful introductory essay by Edward Connor, followed by an A-Z listing of each film. Each entry is accompanied by brief credit details and analysis of the film. This is followed by a few pages on gangster / crime shows that were produced for radio and television.

PARISH, James Robert and PITTS, Michael R.

The great gangster pictures II.

Scarecrow Press, 1987. 397p. illus.

A companion piece to the first 'The great gangster pictures', that expands on the A-Z listing of the original.

POWERS, Richard Gid

G-Men: Hoover's FBI in American popular culture.

Southern Illinois University Press, 1983. 356p. illus. bibliog. index.

Focusing on the law enforcers rather than law-breakers, this book follows the shift the filmmakers had to make from the gangsters to the lawmen, when it was felt that the films glamorised the gangsters. This book explores in particular how J Edgar Hoover's FRB was represented and promoted in American popular culture, in the 1940's/50's.

RAFTER, Nicole

Shots in the mirror: crime films and society.

Oxford University Press, 2000. ix, 201p. illus. filmog. index.

Focusing on America, Rafter explores the sociology and ideology of crime films (including the gangster genre) and their relationship to society. The opening chapter detailing the history of crime films provides a useful and concise overview of the topic. The rest of the chapters are organised by themes rather than films, though all the major US films from the 1930's to the 1990's are covered.

ROSOW, Eugene

Born to lose: the gangster film in America.

Oxford University Press, 1978. 422p. illus. bibliog. filmog. index.

This easy to read, but exhaustive history of the US gangster genre provides an essential understanding of its background, influences and developments through to 1976. This book is also very well illustrated with pictures that complement many of Rosow's observations.

RUTH, David E.

Inventing the public enemy: the gangsters in American culture, 1918-1934.

University of Chicago Press, 1996. 190p. illus. index.

A key text in understanding the attraction of audiences to gangsters. Ruth examines all forms of media to demonstrate why the gangster and public enemies provoked fascinations and how their depiction in the media had little to do with representing reality, and more about a "projection created from America's values, concerns and ideas about what would sell". While not exclusively dealing with gangsters in film, there are many references to the classic gangster films. This book provides a valuable insight into its subject.

SCHATZ, Thomas

Hollywood genres: formulas, filmmaking and the studio system.

Random House, 1981. 297p. illus. bibliog. index.

In this book examining all the Hollywood genres, there is an excellent chapter on the gangster genre. Concentrating on the classic 1930's gangster films, especially SCARFACE and post-war films such as KEY LARGO and WHITE HEAT, Schatz examines the gangster prototypes, the audiences, and the influence of censorship in the form of the Production Code.

SHADOIAN, Jack

Dreams and dead ends: the American gangster/crime film.

MIT Press, 1977. 366p. illus. bibliog. index.

A theoretical examination of the gangster genre that elaborates on many of the characteristics of the films, tries to place them in context of the society they are/were aimed at and attempts

to understand why they have a continuing significance. Shadoian notes the gangster/crime genre “has played an important role in both forming and reflecting the American imagination”. This is a thought provoking and intelligent book.

SLOCUM, J. David

Violence and American cinema.

Routledge, 2001. vii, 311p. notes. index.

This book aims to place film violence in a “cinematic, cultural and historical” context. With references to classic gangster films such as LITTLE CAESAR and PUBLIC ENEMY and more recent American films.

STEPHENS, Michael L.

Gangster films: a comprehensive illustrated reference to people, films and terms.

McFarland, 1996. i-v, 377p. illus. appendix. bibliog. index.

The introduction to this book provides a brief but informative overview of US gangster films, followed by an exhaustive A-Z listing of “people, films and terms”. This is an excellent reference tool, especially if researching American gangster films (though GET CARTER does get listed).

YAQUINTO, Marilyn

Pump ‘em full of lead: a look at gangsters on film.

Twayne Publishers, 1998. I-xix, 265p. illus. bibliog. index.

This authoritative yet entertaining book, examines the cultural evolution of the gangster genre, from the first gangster films from the silent era to Tarantino. Yaquinto not only examines the films, but the filmmakers and the real life events that inspired them. Essential to anyone studying the gangster genre.

WARSHOW, Robert

The immediate experience: movies, comics, theatre and other aspects of popular culture.

Doubleday, 1962. 282p.

Warshow’s essay ‘The gangster as tragic hero’ originally written in 1948 is the seminal text on the gangster film genre. In the first line Warshow notes “America, as a social and political organization, is committed to a cheerful view of life”, and that to demonstrate otherwise could be considered ‘un-American’. Therefore ways had to be found to express opposition to this construct and the gangster films fulfilled that role, with the gangster representing the dilemmas of modern life. Though brief, Warshow’s essay is referred to in nearly all the academic texts on the subject and is interesting in itself to read.

Journal Articles

IN THE PICTURE

no.44. June 2002, pp.16-19

Charting the rise and fall, by John Tomsett

This is a guide for teachers on teaching the gangster genre at A-Level.

JUMP CUT

no.43. July 2000, pp.21-30

Heat: work and genre, by J. A. Lindstrom

Noting the confusion that reviewers had with trying to describe HEAT, Lindstrom places the film within the gangster genre, though in a reworked form.

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE PROGRAMME

July 1999, pp.24-25

Icons of the underworld, by Geoff Andrew

An introduction to a season of gangster films showing at the National Film Theatre.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.6 no.8. August 1996, pp.15-19

Dark side of the dream, by Manohla Dargis

Written upon the re-release of THE GODFATHER, this- at times- critical article looks at the development of the gangster genre and compares how the films from the 1990s onwards seem to be parodying the earlier films of the 1930's.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.1 no.7. November 1991, pp.10-13

Eating children is wrong, by Mark Winokur

Winokur argues that many contemporary gangster films from THE GODFATHER trilogy onwards show "the ambivalence of filmmakers towards ethnicity and race". Nostalgia is used as a way of not confronting current social problems.

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

vol.58 no.687. April 1991, pp.93-96

The gangster file: from the Musketeers to Goodfellas, by Raymond Durnat

Starting with an in-depth definition of gangs and gangsters (and when a gang of criminals aren't gangsters), Durnat then leads into a social history of the gangster genre and how it has changed over time. This article provides a thorough overview of the genre.

JOURNAL OF POPULAR FILM AND TELEVISION

vol.8 no.4. Winter 1981, pp.30-39

The criminal psychopath as Hollywood hero, by Wayne J. Douglass

Borrowing heavily from Robert Warshaw's theory of gangster as "tragic hero", Douglass looks at the development of screen gangsters into psychopaths, as typified in films like KISS OF DEATH and WHITE HEAT to the more recent BADLANDS and TAXI DRIVER. He notes that while American audiences could sympathise with the gangster's ambitions (if not their methods), the criminal psychopaths that have replaced them in the narratives are more problematical, but have turned the protagonists into anti-heroes.

JOURNAL OF POPULAR FILM

vol.6 no.3. 1978, pp.240-261

American nightmare: the underworld in film, by Mark M. Hennelly Jr.

Hennelly views the gangsters in an existential light; as ciphers for American wish-fulfilment. A potentially useful, though at times difficult to read, work.

FILM READER

no.3. February 1978, pp.67-79

The generic origins of the bandit-gangster sub-genre in the American cinema, by Garner Simmons

Examining films such as BONNIE AND CLYDE and THEY LIVE BY NIGHT, but noting that it can also take in films like BADLANDS, DILLINGER and THIEVES LIKE US, Simmons describes bandit-gangster films as being "essentially love stories". They differ from the classic gangster films in other ways too; they tend to have rural settings, in which the couple are on the run (usually from the police) and that "ultimately the couple is destroyed at the peak of their exhaustion and love". This interesting article examines both the classic gangster and western genres in order to define the bandit-gangster films.

FILM COMMENT

vol.13 no.3. May/June 1977, pp.10-16

Hooverville West: The Hollywood G-Man, 1934-1945, by Carlos Clarens

Examines how the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover in particular, grew in strength and how mistrustful of movies at first, they started to vet films such as G-MEN and others.

VELVET LIGHT TRAP

no.11. Winter 1974, pp.17-19

Some thoughts on Fifties gangster films, by Richard Whitehall

Noting that the gangster genre has become "the most significant and vital of all the American film genres". Whitehall sees the films of the 1950's as "consolidating" the genre, while at the same time being more biographical and introspective, rather than as being social or historical pieces. Amongst the films assessed are THE ASPHALT JUNGLE and WHITE HEAT.

FILMS AND FILMING

vol.10 no.6. March 1964, pp.39-43

Public enemies, by Richard Whitehall

Looking at the cycle of gangster films made toward the late 1950's up to the late 1960's, (including *BABY FACE NELSON*, *AL CAPONE* and *THE BONNIE PARKER STORY*), which were exercises in nostalgia rather than sociology. These films tended to be biographical in intention, based on real-life American gangsters, but as Whitehall wryly notes "not one of these films pays the slightest attention to the known facts".

FILMS AND FILMING

vol.10 no.5. February 1964, pp.17-22

G-Men and gangsters, by Richard Whitehall

Starting with a brief but informative history of the gangsters themselves, Whitehall then launches into an analysis of the second cycle of gangster films, where the G-Men (or FBI agents) were the heroes, rather than the gangsters.

FILMS AND FILMING

vol.5 no.9. June 1959

Hoodlums: the myth...or the reality, by Richard Siodmak and Richard Wilson

Filmmaker Richard Siodmak (*THE KILLERS* and *THE CRY OF THE CITY*) writes a defence of crime films, noting that he preferred a fictional, character-driven approach to the narratives, rather than the documentary style being evoked by, then, contemporary gangster films. Wilson on the other hand (director of *AL CAPONE*) argues in favour of a stylised version of realism. Worth reading if only for Siodmak's inadvertently amusing remarks.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.15 no.58. Summer 1946, pp.62-63

The gangster comes home, by Roger Manvell

A feature on films that Manvell terms "domestic" gangsters. These seem to be films that are less to do with the "gang" and are more concerned with general immorality. The idea is interesting, but not one that is easy to follow.

US Gangsters

compiled by Ayesha Khan

Journal Articles

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.8 no.5. May 1998, pp.28-29

The Aginster, by Michael Eaton

Described by Eaton as “the greatest male movie star of the early golden age of sound”, this is a review of a biography of James Cagney. Though it doesn't have any information on the gangster genre it does provide a flavour of the studio system in which they were created, and insight into one of the classic gangster films most famous stars.

ON FILM

no.12. Spring 1984, pp.29-36

The “audience” goes “public”: inter-textuality, genre, and the responsibilities of film literacy, by Gregory Lukow and Steven Ricci

This densely theoretical article does not invite easy understanding of its subject. Using the classic Warner Brothers gangster films, including PUBLIC ENEMY and LITTLE CAESAR, Lukow and Ricci attempt to show how these films signalled the conventions of the genre and then how they enabled audiences to read these and subsequent gangster films.

FILM COMMENT

vol.13 no.3. May/June 1977, pp.6-9

Big funerals: the Hollywood gangster, 1927-1933, by Andrew Sarris

Referring, as many articles and books on the subject do, to Robert Warshow's 1948 essay “The gangster as tragic hero”, Sarris notes that he was only referring to a handful of films made between 1927-1933. In this run-through of the gangster films made between these periods Sarris examines the films and how the characteristics of the genre were formed. Particular attention is paid to LITTLE CAESAR, SCARFACE, and PUBLIC ENEMY and how within the films of this period “anarchic rebellion was implied everywhere”.

VELVET LIGHT TRAP

no.3. Winter 1971/1972, pp.16-18

Notes on early gangster comedy, by Gerald Peary

When referring to “comedy” in gangster films, Peary actually seems to be referring to a cynical, almost black humour. SCARFACE is used as an example of this and other classic gangster films are mentioned as well. However, more straightforward comedy films of the gangster genre are also mentioned such as LADY FOR A DAY and the LITTLE MISS MARKER. A little written about addition to the literature covering the first cycle of gangster films.

VELVET LIGHT TRAP

no.1. June 1971, pp.2-4

Warner Brothers in the Thirties: some tentative notes, by Russell Campbell

An overview of Warner Brothers and how it came to specialise in socially realistic subjects, with some references to PUBLIC ENEMY and other gangster films made by the studio. Also includes some financial data.

VELVET LIGHT TRAP

no.1. June 1971, pp.5-11

An analysis of the gangster movies of the early Thirties, by Arthur Sacks

This dense but highly informative article, starts by detailing the history of the gangster film and its development as a genre. This is followed by an examination of the characteristics of the gangster genre (in the classic 1930's gangster films). This article provides a good introduction for anyone studying the gangster genre.

FILMS AND FILMING

vol.18 no.2. November 1971, pp.17-30

Gangster heroes, by Alan Warner

An article focusing mainly on the actors and directors associated with the classic gangster films.

FILM HERITAGE

vol.2 no.4. Summer 1967, pp.9-25

James M. Cain and the movies of the Thirties and Forties, by David Madden

Focusing in particular on the novelist and screenwriter James M. Cain (DOUBLE INDEMNITY and THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE), this article looks at the relationship between crime films and crime novels and notes that many of the writers worked in both fields.

FILMS AND FILMING

vol.10 no.4. January 1964, pp.7-12

The rackets and the mobs, by Richard Whitehall

Part of a three part series on American gangster films, the first deals with first cycle or classic gangster films of the 1930's. Looking at the social background of the films i.e. Prohibition, rural versus urban America, he then leads into the development of the gangster genre, noting (as many others do) that "sound was one of the saviours of the gangster film". A detailed examination of the period and films, and how the tide turned against such films. Unusual is Whitehall's view that both PUBLIC ENEMY and LITTLE CAESAR are "pretty sad stuff".

MOTION PICTURE HERALD

vol.161 no.9. 1st December 1945, p.38

Seek to outlaw gangster films in Minneapolis

This is an amusing article that highlights Minneapolis's attempts to ban all "morally objectionable" stage and screen productions, including gangster films.

MOTION PICTURE DAILY

Thursday 31st October 1935, p.1

Hays organization places ban on G-Man film cycle

A brief but historically interesting article announcing the agreement by the Hays Office and film producers not to produce films that "portray the activities of American gangsters in violent conflict with the law".

Little Caesar (1930) Dir. Mervyn Le Roy

Books

PEARY, Gerald (ed.)

Little Caesar

University of Wisconsin Press, 1981. 185p. illus. bibliog.

Peary's introduction to this screenplay examines the origins of the story and how the film came to be made. Placing LITTLE CAESAR as the archetype on which the gangster genre was formed, Peary also looks at some of the meaning of the film. This introduction and screenplay presents a useful starting point to anyone studying the film.

Journal Articles

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

vol.34 no.505. February 1976, pp.38-39

Little Caesar, by Richard Combs

In this retrospective review, to mark the film's re-release, Combs initially starts by comparing LITTLE CAESAR with PUBLIC ENEMY noting that both films "fit so tightly into the same niche". However, he goes on to note that LITTLE CAESAR is "less complex" of the two films and that while Edward G. Robinson's performance is good, the film feels as if it has to be overly condemning of Rico towards the end.

JOURNAL OF POPULAR FILM

vol.1 no.3. Summer 1972, pp.209-226

"Little Caesar" and its role in the gangster genre, by Stuart M. Kaminsky

Kaminsky's thorough and thoughtful article begins with asserting that as the first gangster film of the US 1930's cycle, many of the elements and motifs that we recognise as being part of the gangster genre had their archetype in LITTLE CAESAR. Kaminsky examines the meaning

of these elements and how they relate to LITTLE CAESAR and the films that followed. This is an essential article for anyone studying the gangster genre.

PICTUREGOER

vol.1 no.24. 7th November 1931, pp.20-22

Taking the glamour off gangsters, by Lionel Collier

Collier praises LITTLE CAESAR and in particular, the performance of Edward G. Robinson as being the most “convincing and villainous racketeer”. He also condemns gangster films as glamorising the villains too much.

BIOSCOPE

vol.87, no.1280. 15th April 1931, pp.29-30

Little Caesar

This positive review suggests that the film “demonstrates clearly the ruling characteristic of the criminal class, an overwhelming conceit which invariably encompasses their end”. It is interesting to note that the tone of the review seems to be confused between being sympathetic towards the gangsters while not appearing to condone them.

MOTION PICTURE HERALD

17th January 1931, p.60

Little Caesar

A review that praises the film and asserts “the real moral lesson is there, that the crook gets his in the end. However, it is not blazoned across the face of the film.”

Public Enemy (1931) Dir. William Wellman

Books

O’CONNOR, John and **JACKSON**, Martin A.

American history/American film: interpreting the Hollywood image (Expanded ed.).

Ungar, 1988. 306p. illus. bibliog. filmog. index.

Garth Jowett’s chapter on PUBLIC ENEMY provides a concise and informative overview of the making of the film and its background in Depression hit America. Jowett gives both budget and box office figures, and neatly summarises a lot of the critical arguments that have surrounded the film. In particular, Jowett highlights James Cagney’s appeal to an urban audience and how his charisma helps give the gangster an almost iconic status. For anyone new to the film, this chapter is an excellent starting point.

THEW, Henry, **GLASMON**, Kubec and **BRIGHT**, John

The Public Enemy.

University of Wisconsin Press, 1981. 187p. illus. bibliog.

In the introduction to Kubec Glasmon and John Bright’s screenplay of PUBLIC ENEMY, Henry Cohen highlights the two writers’ childhoods in Chicago and how the city’s real-life gangsters

influenced them. Cohen also explains how the film was adapted from Glasmon and Bright's original novel 'Beer and Blood'. As part of the introduction, Cohen also includes sections on how the characters and structure were changed from page to screen, the actual making of the film and how the film ran into problems with the censors upon release. Though this book does not analyse the film as such, this introduction and the screenplay are useful additions when studying the film.

Journal Articles

CREATIVE SCREENWRITING

vol. 4 no. 1 Spring 1997, pp.99-106

Heartless Tom: scripting Irish myth, by E. Michael Desilets

An examination of two Irish-American screen gangsters: James Cagney's Tom Powers in PUBLIC ENEMY and Gabriel Byrne as Tom Reagan in the Coen brothers MILLER'S CROSSING. In particular he focuses on the notion of "heartlessness" and loneliness. Contains the little known fact that upon its release PUBLIC ENEMY was banned in the Irish Free State.

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

February 1976, p.39

Public Enemy, by Richard Combs

Shown as part of a retrospective on gangster film in 1976, Combs makes some comparisons not only between PUBLIC ENEMY and LITTLE CAESAR, but also with Sam Peckinpah's THE WILD BUNCH. The review touches on some of the themes usually associated with the gangster genre, such as, ethnicity, images of city life, women, and the fine line between glamorising and condemning the actions of the protagonists.

Press Articles

NFT PROGRAMME NOTES

1st-31st December 1964

A tribute to the Warner Brothers

Taken from "The film till now" (1949) by Paul Rotha and Richard Griffith, this gives a concise account of the film's popularity.

CINEMA TEXAS PROGRAMME NOTES

20th February 1973

The Public Enemy

This programme notes for a screening of PUBLIC ENEMY comprise of a series of quotes, from reviews or by the people involved (including James Cagney). This is a useful source of information about the film.

Scarface (1932) Dir. Howard Hawks

Books

TRAIL, Armitage

Scarface.

Bloomsbury, 1997.

This re-issue of the original 1930 novel could provide useful background reading material for people studying either the 1930 or 1983 film adaptations.

Journal Articles

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

vol.47 no.559 August 1980, pp.164-165

Scarface, by Tim Pulleine

Pulleine's review focuses on the character of Tony Camonte, and the parallels with real-life gangster Al Capone. This is more critical than contemporary reviews.

BRIGHT LIGHTS

vol.1 no.4. Summer 1976, pp.20-21

Scarface, by John Belton

This article traces the problems the film had with not only the censors, but also with the larger studios and the notoriety the film soon gained. It is perhaps interesting to note that at the time this article was written in 1972, SCARFACE could only be screened illegally as its owner/producer Howard Hughes had withdrawn it from distribution.

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

vol.5 no.52 April 1938, p.108

Scarface, by E. P.

This brief review of the film was written upon the re-release of the film in 1938. The reviewer proclaims it "the best of all gangster films".

PHOTOPLAY

vol.41 no.6. May 1932, p.48

The shadow stage: Scarface

A review that describes SCARFACE as "the best gangster film ever made".

MOTION PICTURE HERALD

28th May 1932, p.57

Scarface

In a journal aimed at exhibitors the reviewer states that while the film can be seen as “depressing” it will do well at the box office and has “many magnetic selling angles”. The review also comes with this warning: “kids should not be admitted during the run of a picture like this and...it ought to be shown away from a Sunday”.

KINEMATOGRAPH WEEKLY

26th May 1932, p.59

Scarface

An enthusiastic review of the film describing it as a “Terrific, terrifying melodrama”.

PICTUREGOER

26th November 1932, p.19

On the screens now: Scarface, by Lionel Collier

Describing the film as “not a picture for the squeamish” Collier praises the film and the performances. He notes, “stark realism is the order of the day”.

Press Articles

EVENING STANDARD

27th July 2000, p.13

Scarface, by Alexander Walker

This on the whole positive preview of the film (which was to be screened at the NFT), notes that the date the film was made is important “The talkies had established themselves by then; censorship of the screen had not”, allowing the filmmakers to be more daring with their narrative and characterisations. He also notes the stylistic traits that would become a fixture for most American gangster films that followed.

TORONTO FILM SOCIETY

Seventh Exhibition Meeting, 14th February 1966

The gangsters

A programme from a film society screening of SCARFACE and HIGH SIERRA, which contains two essays. These provide useful background information on the popularity of the American gangster films. The first essay gives quite a detailed overview of early 20thc. American history, while the second essay, on the films themselves, contains many useful journal extracts.

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE PROGRAMME NOTES

The 20's – how they roared

Programme notes to accompany a screening of SCARFACE, that contain many useful quotes and journal extracts, including an interview with the director, Howard Hawks.

MAGILL'S SURVEY OF CINEMA

Scarface: the shame of a nation

An essay taken from notes for a screening of SCARFACE. This brief, but useful essay, starts by noting that "gangsters presented a special and perverse fascination", before going on to comment, not only about SCARFACE, but also PUBLIC ENEMY and LITTLE CAESAR.

The Godfather Trilogy (1972, 1974, 1990) Dir: Francis Ford Coppola

Books

BERGAN, Ronald

Francis Coppola.

Thunder's Mouth Press, 1998. 144p. illus. (some col.) bibliog.

Brief but up-to-date Coppola biography with a small chapter on each of the films, as well as full *Variety* reviews.

BISKIND, Peter

The Godfather companion: everything you ever wanted to know about all three Godfather movies.

HarperCollins, 1990. 193p. plates. bibliog.

Behind-the-scenes Hollywood is Biskind's forte. This book covers similar ground to that of Gardner and Gardner (*below*) but in a more entertaining machine-gun prose style, and featuring interviews with the likes of Coppola, Evans and Bart. For an excellent account of Coppola the *wunderkind* and the wheeler dealing involved in the making of the first GODFATHER, see also Biskind's *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*.

BROWNE, Nick

Francis Ford Coppola's: The Godfather trilogy.

Cambridge University Press, 2000. ix-xiv, 191p. illus. filmog. bibliog. index.

One of the "Cambridge Film Handbook" series, which focuses on a single film from a variety of perspectives, this recent volume features five original essays: a behind-the-scenes look at how and why the films got made; an examination of Mafia mythology and its intertwined relationship with popular culture (as the GODFATHER films transformed the way that the Mafia was seen, by the world and by itself, forever); an analysis of ethnicity and the films' creation of a particular kind of Italian-American "fashioned to the needs and dictates of a society at a distinct period in American history"; a chapter on the ideological contradictions of the crime genre and how the GODFATHER films critique contemporary capitalism; and a comparison between the films and the form and spirit of nineteenth-century Italian opera. The book also

contains two lengthy contemporary reviews of GODFATHER I and II from *Partisan Review* and *Commentary*.

COWIE, Peter

The Godfather book.

Faber and Faber, 1997. viii-xiii, 257p. illus. index.

Although lacking a detailed textual analysis, this volume is a fascinating trawl through the production process of the three GODFATHER films, and does feature chapters on the themes of family, the misuse of power and the films' main characters. Particularly interesting is the account of Coppola's shaping of Puzo's novel into "a drama of five acts and fifty scenes" as well as the production's brushes with the real Mafia.

COWIE, Peter

Coppola (revised edition).

Faber and Faber, 1998. 308p. [16] plates. filmog. index.

Widely considered the definitive biography of Coppola, this revised edition features detailed chapters on all three GODFATHER films. While celebrating I and II Cowie, like many other critics, believes the trilogy ends "not with a bang but with a whimper" (p.251).

GARDNER, Gerald and GARDNER, Harriet Modell

The Godfather movies: a pictorial history.

Wings Books, 1993. 191p. illus.

"Leave the gun. Take the canolis." "Luca Brasi sleeps with the fishes". If you need refreshing on your favourite GODFATHER quotes, want to know how many hugs, kisses and squeezes occur in THE GODFATHER (16, apparently) or require a Corleone crime family tree to work out who's who, then this lightweight but surprisingly informative book is for you. Nice pictures, too.

MALYSZKO, William

The Godfather.

York Press, 2001. 87p. bibliog. filmog.

Part of the "Ultimate Film Guides" series specifically designed for GCSE and A-Level students, this is an excellent primer with clear and concise chapters on the film's background, narrative and form, style and contexts. Malyszko briefly introduces some of the most important topics of film studies (such as the auteur theory, genre and the "invisible style" of Classical Hollywood Cinema) and some of the key theoreticians (for example, Aristotle's ideas about the narrative structure of tragedy, the binary oppositions of Levi-Strauss and Vogler's work on myth), mapping THE GODFATHER onto these various analytical models.

ZUKER, Joel S.

Francis Ford Coppola: a guide to references and resources.

G.K. Hall, 1984. 241p. bibliog. filmog. indexes.

Although too early to feature material about the final part of the trilogy, this is a very useful guide to the plethora of (mostly) journalistic and academic writing on GODFATHER I and II, including brief description of contents. Also features synopses and detailed credits.

Journal Articles

FILM COMMENT

March/April 2002, pp.30-44

Mythmaker: Francis Ford Coppola; Coppola's family plot..., by Kent Jones and Richard Combs

Includes in-depth look at the making of the trilogy.

PREMIERE (GB)

September 1997, pp.70-79

Mob rule, by Peter Biskind

Interviews with the major players behind the production of THE GODFATHER, including Coppola, Evans, Murch and Puzo. Amusing anecdotes.

EMPIRE

April 1991, pp.62-9

It's a family affair, by Anne Thompson; **The never ending story**, by Philip Thomas

Thompson interviews Coppola and Pacino about the production of GODFATHER III, while Thomas gives an overview and a chart of comparative scenes in the trilogy.

CINEMA PAPERS

March 1991, p14-20

Francis Ford Coppola: an offer he couldn't refuse, by Ana Maria Bahiana

Interview with Coppola about GODFATHER III, includes comments on I and II. Coppola compares the trajectory of Michael Corleone to "the kind of phases that America was going through", "paranoid, suspicious and violent" in II (released at the time of Watergate) and, in III, as "someone confessional, trying to find new meaning".

FILM COMMENT

August 1987, pp. 22-6

Family lies, by George De Stefano

De Stefano argues that the Mafia gangster movie has "come to represent Italian ethnicity in movies" and traces the origins of such stereotypes as "the Mafioso" and "the Urban Primitive" (of which he cites the Italian-Americans of MEAN STREETS as examples) in U.S. society and cinema.

FILM CRITICISM

Autumn 1978, pp.35-44

The Godfather I and II: patterns of corruption, by Anthony Ambrogio

For Ambrogio, key set pieces of I are echoed in far darker tones in II, such as the opening celebration (wedding/communion), the family structure and the final bloodbath. This is not merely generic repetition but a thematic device, as “Godfather II’s imperfect repetitions show the expansion of evil, the degeneration of crime and of that criminal empire”.

JOURNAL OF POPULAR FILM

Spring 1973, pp. 115-37; pp. 204-9.

Motifs of image and sound in The Godfather, by Judith Vogelsang / **The Godfather: metaphor and microcosm**, by Jonathan P. Latimer

Vogelsang sees orange (the colour and the fruit) as a symbol of betrayal and death and discusses the role of cars, baptisms and Clemenza, the “loyal capo” in this textual analysis of THE GODFATHER. Latimer analyses THE GODFATHER’s popularity among cinemagoers, arguing that violence is legitimised as a “necessary business” and that the film celebrates the Outlaw, drawing “parallels between the world of the Corleones and a world picture widely held in grassroots America today.”

JOURNAL OF POPULAR FILM

vol.4 no.2. 1975, pp. 157-63

Godfather saga: the death of the family, by John Yates

While not disputing that THE GODFATHER I and II are metaphors for “America’s rottenness”, Yates argues that the film’s greatest strength is in its dissection of the family, “how it worked through the generations, and how it now falls apart.”

Once upon a time in America (1983)

Dir. Sergio Leone

Books

CUMBOW, Robert C.

Once upon a time: the films of Sergio Leone.

Scarecrow Press, 1987. 266p. illus. bibliog. filmog. index.

Includes chapter on ONCE..., but primarily an auteurist study of Leone, and doesn't touch on specifically "gangster" aspects of the film.

FRAYLING, Christopher

Sergio Leone: something to do with death.

Faber and Faber, 2000. ix-xvii, 570p. [16] plates. bibliog. filmog. index.

Frayling's comprehensive account of Leone's films includes an 86-page chapter on ONCE... With its complex time structure and elegiac mood, ONCE... resembles "Citizen Kane retold as a gangster epic" (p421). For Leone, the source material, Harry Grey's memoir, *The Hoods*, was itself an unconscious working of movie clichés, which, in the director's hands, became "a full-blown homage to Hollywood in the pre-war era" (p421). Thus, ONCE... is littered with "gangster movie" citations "from D.W. Griffith's THE MUSKATEERS OF PIG ALLEY in 1912 to THE BIG HEAT in 1953, from the first-generation lone-wolf hoodlums to the era of big business and the Syndicate (p422)."

MARTIN, Adrian

Once Upon a Time in America: BFI modern classics.

British Film Institute, 1998. 96p. illus. (some col.) credits.

In this excellent study, Martin argues that Leone's pulp-poetry epic deviates from the generic expectations of the gangster movie and that "within this genre, it is surely a very curious and attenuated exercise" (p37). For example, while the gangsters' exploits suggest a "gleefully arrested development" akin to Warshow's uber-Gangster, they certainly do not die in a blaze of glory; and while the trajectory of the classic gangster film is a rise-and-fall saga of manifest destiny, ONCE... "is a film of breakdown and crack-up, of loss and oblivion." The theme of betrayal, a generic staple, is here taken to tragic new heights as Max "systematically takes away from Noodles...the classic inventory of the gangster hero's possessions – the money, the power, the girl" (p43). More than a story of gangsters, ONCE... is "a tale of male pathos" (p56) draped in a raincoat and fedora. Martin also notes the influence of the film's fatalistic and melancholic tone on the gangster genre's revival in early '90s films such as THE GODFATHER PART III (1990), KING OF NEW YORK (1990), BUGSY (1991), BILLY BATHGATE (1991) and CARLITO'S WAY (1993). In these films, "the gangster hero becomes, more than ever, a type of phantom or zombie haunted by betrayal, and the inevitability of his own demise. He is the last action hero, frozen in immobility as the entire grand machine of epic gangster narrative winds down and splutters out around him (p84)."

Journal Articles

FILM CRITICISM

vol.10 no.1. Autumn 1985, pp. 3-17

Notions of authorship and the reception of *Once Upon a Time in America*, by Adam Knee

Knee takes an overview of US critical reception to both the Leone-approved and studio-approved versions, in order to examine questions of directorial authorship.

CINEMA PAPERS

no.49. December 1984, pp. 458-9

Once Upon a Time in America, Rolando Caputo

In his review, Caputo compares the film to American novelists like Dos Passos (the epic dimensions and narrative scope) and Faulkner (the complex time-structure and use of repetition). Caputo argues that the film's "true themes [are] the shedding of innocence and how an individual lives with grief."

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

October 1984, pp. 295-7

Once Upon a Time in America, by Tony Rayns

Detailed review in which Rayns sees *Once...* as Leone's "most expansive and fully realised meditation on "New World" mythology: a sad account of the American dream."

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.53 no.4. Autumn 1984, pp. 301

The World was yours: Once Upon a Time in America, by Chris Peachment

Peachment observes that Leone's gangster epic departs from the conventions of the genre in its complex time structure, and also in the character of Noodles: "Most screen gangsters seem to be men of near-superhuman abilities...Noodles however is resolutely ordinary."

FILM COMMENT

vol.20 no.4. July/August 1984, pp. 18-20; 21-3.

Once upon a time..., by Mary Corliss / ***A fable for adults***, by Elaine Lomenzo

Leone discusses the film and his fascination with America; Corliss' reviews the film as impressive but flawed, and regards the studio-cut 144min version as superior to Leone's original.

AMERICAN FILM

vol.9 no.8. June 1984, pp. 20-29

Once Upon a Time in America, by Pete Hamill

A look at Leone's lengthy preparation for the film and an interview with the director – includes pertinent quotations from Robert Warshaw's seminal account of the gangster figure, 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero'.

Press Articles (all available on microfiche in the Reading Room):

"A lyrically pulpy fantasy of Jewish gangsters in Brooklyn eventually mirroring the lost dreams of all Americans" (Andrew Sarris, *Voice*, 5/6/84); "a film of extraordinary beauty and power" (Peter Ackroyd, *The Spectator*, 3/10/84); "unfolds more like a piece of modernist fiction than a conventional gangster pic" (Geoffrey Macnab, *Time Out*, 14/2/96); "*The Godfather* reworked in the grandiose manner of *Once Upon a Time in the West*" (Philip French, *The Observer*, 3/6/84); "*Gone With the Wind* of the American underworld" (Alexander Walker, *Evening Standard*, 24/3/84); "lumbering gigantism" (Nigel Andrews, *Financial Times*, 29/5/84); "an Epic fuck-up" (Ian Penman, *NME*, 6/10/84).

Goodfellas (1990) and Casino (1993) Dir. Martin Scorsese

Books

BOORMAN, John and **DONOHUE**, Walter (eds.)

Projections 7.

Faber and Faber, 1997. 308p. illus. filmog.

Features an informative interview with Scorsese, in which he talks in detail about the Mob, GOODFELLAS and CASINO. Scorsese sees his films as “like a documentary” compared with the “mythological epics” (p12) of the *Godfather* films. For Scorsese, “there’s a real allure and attractiveness to becoming a gangster... You have to avoid getting sucked in by the way of life” (p17). As well as an interview with Thelma Schoonmaker-Powell, Scorsese’s editor, about CASINO, there are two short critical pieces on the film. In the first, Nicolas Saada sees the Las Vegas of Casino as a “shattering metaphor for America” (p30) in which spectacle acts as a screen to hide the brutal reality behind which institutions (from the Mob to the State) operate with impunity. More than just a gangster film, CASINO “operates within the confines of all genres: musical comedy without music, horror film, film noir, tragedy” (p32).

BRUNETTE, Peter (ed.)

Martin Scorsese interviews.

University Press of Mississippi, 1999. 270p. [8] plates. index.

This volume includes an interview with Scorsese about CASINO (originally published in *Sight and Sound*, January 1996) by Ian Christie, who finds the film “darker, more complex and more ambitious” (p222) than GOODFELLAS. Also features an interview with Gavin Smith about GOODFELLAS (from *Film Comment*, Sep/Oct, 1990) in which Scorsese comments that the film is, like many of his works, about “materialism versus a spiritual life...the idea that if you live for a certain kind of value, at a certain point in life you’re going to come smack up against a brick wall” (p149).

BRUZZI, Stella

Undressing cinema: clothing and identity in the movies.

Routledge, 1997. v-xxi, 226p. filmog. bibliog. index.

Clothes in gangster movies have always signified “status, money and style”, according to Bruzzi, but contemporary gangster films like GOODFELLAS and CASINO “have articulated the disintegration of the mythic gangster...by emphasising the tackiness of the *nouveau riche* mob lifestyle and milleaux” (p82). Henry Hill in GOODFELLAS, for example, equates conspicuous consumption with having “made it” and his subsequent downfall is symbolised by his towelling robe, “the uniform of a loser...who cannot be bothered to get dressed” (p86).

COLLEY, Iain

Goodfellas.

York Press, 2001. 87p. bibliog.

Excellent starting point, this concise study guide features lots of detail on how GOODFELLAS relates to the gangster genre in terms of, for example, narrative structure, iconography, the influence of film noir and character types. There is also a useful account of the development of the gangster genre itself, with reference to important critical works such as Colin

McArthur's *Underworld USA* and Phil Hardy's *Gangsters*, as well as a good bibliography for further study.

CONNELLY, Marie Kathryn

Martin Scorsese: an analysis of his feature films, with a filmography of his entire directorial career.

McFarland, 1993. 180p. illus. filmog. index.

Features a solid-enough chapter on GOODFELLAS, if hardly striking in its originality.

DOUGAN, Andy

Martin Scorsese.

Thunder's Mouth Press, 1998. 143p. illus. (some col.).

This slim volume includes a brief account of both films, with much of Scorsese in his own words. For Dougan, CASINO "fulfils [Scorsese's] ambition to make a western...a little like Goodfellas goes west" (p105). GOODFELLAS, for Scorsese is "an indictment [of] organized crime and how and why it works" (p96).

While both films were criticised for their violence, "the violence which [the gangsters] perpetrate invariably has repercussions. Scorsese knows this better than anyone, having grown up amongst it" (p95).

FRIEDMAN, Lawrence S.

The cinema of Martin Scorsese.

Roundhouse Publishing, 1997. 200p. illus. bibliog. index.

For Friedman, GOODFELLAS and CASINO are "valedictories to the Mob" (p178) as well as "Scorsese's antidote to the romanticized Mafia of The Godfather" (p171). Both films "rely heavily on documentary techniques" (p170) – voice-overs, freeze frames, captions, historical references – but their dramas recall Greek tragedy in Robert Warshaw's classic formulation: "The gangster movie...is a story of enterprise and success ending in precipitate failure" (p170).

KOLKER, Robert

A cinema of loneliness (3rd ed.).

Oxford University Press: 2000. ix-xviii, 484p. illus. filmog. index.

For Kolker, GOODFELLAS is "the gangster film as low-life screwball comedy with blood and with a self-awareness that distracts us from its more appalling elements" (p202). As much a "parody of the *Godfather* films" (p202) as a realist fiction about gangster life, GOODFELLAS is highly reflexive and ironic, drawing constant attention to itself as a text within the gangster genre and requiring the audience "to interrogate our response to the history of the gangster film" (p203). CASINO (which, for Kolker, completes a trilogy begun by MEAN STREETS in 1973), in contrast, contains little irony and is more global and political in its scope. While GOODFELLAS "hoods a wink" at its audience, "in *Casino* the audience's gaze is continually interrupted by sadistic acts of violence that are seen as central to the gangster's world. Visual pleasure...is compromised by *Casino*" (p205). An illuminating account of both films as well as Scorsese's earlier MEAN STREETS.

T

HOMPSON, David and CHRISTIE, Ian

Scorsese on Scorsese.

Faber and Faber, 1996. ix-xxi, 254p. appendix. filmog. bibliog. index.

This revised and updated volume features extensive sections on GOODFELLAS (pp.150-65) and CASINO (pp.198-209). Scorsese discusses the influence of the French New Wave on the style of GOODFELLAS, characterisation, music and Mob life. On CASINO, the director justifies its violence and gives details of the film's factual basis, as well as talking about music and costume in the film. For Scorsese, CASINO is "the Old Testament story: gaining paradise and losing it, through pride and through greed" (p200).

YAQUINTO, Marilyn

Pump 'em full of lead: a look at gangsters on film.

Twayne Publishers, 1998. i-xix, 265p. illus. bibliog. filmog.

For Yaquinto, GOODFELLAS is "a roller-coaster look at the day-to-day lifestyle of a group of wise guys and their families. They don't live with the ethnic holism of the Corleones, with their sturdy links to Sicilian traditions. Instead, these hoods reflect the breakdown of family order and the infiltration of yuppie nihilism" (p169). While calling GOODFELLAS Scorsese's "gangster masterpiece", Yaquinto is less kind to CASINO, describing De Niro and Pesci's "familiar face-off (of) complex, smouldering gangster versus unmanageable, lunatic killer" as "a parody, lacking all its former edginess and sense of threat" (p174).

Journal Articles

CREATIVE SCREENWRITING

vol.8 no.2. March/April 2001, pp.38-43

'A real good fella', by David Konow

A revealing interview with the author, and co-screenwriter, of GOODFELLAS and CASINO. Pileggi discusses his early career as a police reporter; his interviews with Henry Hill (the subject of his book *Wiseguy*, on which GOODFELLAS was based) and his collaboration with Scorsese on both films.

CINEACTION!

no.41. October 1996, pp.14-21

Style as attitude: two films by Martin Scorsese, by Richard Lippe

Lippe's essay is distinguished by detailed textual analysis of both GOODFELLAS and CASINO. The former is discussed in terms of its bravura opening sequence, its Godardian play with generic expectations and its "undercurrent of absurdity" (p16). CASINO's opening sequences are also discussed for the ways in which they establish theme and tone. Lippe sees the film as "a strictly dramatic work...about failure, loss and death" (p18) whose tone "links Casino not to Goodfellas but to *The Age of Innocence* and *Raging Bull*" (p18). Lippe also links CASINO to Barry Levinson's BUGSY (1991, about the mobster Bugsy Siegel) which similarly "connects Las Vegas to the fate of a heterosexual couple's relationship" (p21) but "unlike Bugsy, Casino isn't a romantic film" and its "portrait of Las Vegas isn't inviting or seductive" (p21). Lippe calls the film "[among] the finest achievements of the decade" and calls for its reappraisal those critics who regarded it a no more than a re-run of GOODFELLAS.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.6 no.3. March 1996, p.40

Casino, by Jonathan Romney

Though describing CASINO's similarity to GOODFELLAS as "at times uncomfortably close", Romney views the film more as a companion piece. This is a review of the film that while at times critical, sees the films themes brilliantly portrayed.

FILM COMMENT

vol.32 no.1. January/February 1996, pp.59-63

Two thousand light years from home: Scorsese's big Casino, by Gavin Smith

Smith compares CASINO to Scorsese's earlier MEAN STREETS, "both films about the price paid by those who serve the Mob" and, following the films' titles as literal signifiers, argues that "Mean Streets is about territory, Goodfellas about tribe, and Casino about a sacred place, or religion" (p59), a vision of Las Vegas where surveillance cameras see all and money is the true God. The film is "an authentic glimpse of the spiritual vacancy of a life of things, a horror Goodfellas never quite admits" (p60). Smith compares the films' narrators, Liotta's Henry Hill and De Niro's Ace Rothstein, both of whom have "immunity from retribution, conscience and self-knowledge". But Hill is "the simpler man" while Ace is the "psychopath-as-Organisation Man" (p60). Smith also draws fruitful comparisons between CASINO and the work of Stanley Kubrick, in particular 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY.

FILM QUARTERLY

vol.44 no.3. Spring 1991, pp.43-49

Goodfellas, by Karen Jaehne

Lengthy review of the film, which Jaehne links to Scorsese's other films about the Italian-American community, all marked by "an intensely contradictory ambivalence" (p43). While many of Scorsese's films (e.g. MEANS STREETS, RAGING BULL) have "portrayed [the Mob's] impact on the lives and imagination of his ethnic group" (p44), GOODFELLAS is his first film to tackle the Mob directly. Discussing the consistent tension between documentary and fiction forms in Scorsese's films, Jaehne discusses the "free indirect POV" shot, "the stylistic hallmark of a self-conscious realism" which is "the dominant stylistic device in GOODFELLAS" (p48).

CINEMA PAPERS

no.81. December 1990, pp.18-26

Martin Scorsese: gangster and priest, by Ana Maria Bahiana / **Goodfellas: an afterword**, by Raffaele Caputo

Excellent interview with Scorsese in which he talks primarily about GOODFELLAS in response to the accusation that 'bad guys' populate his world. Scorsese argues that "It goes all the way back to Greek tragedy. You always had an antagonist who is more interesting than the protagonist... We like to live vicariously through these characters." Scorsese also talks about how movie gangsters are often "very solemn, very serious people...it's not what I remember from growing up in an area [with] underworld figures".

Writing on GOODFELLAS, Caputo describes the dynamics of mobster power: for leader Paulie, "Power is measured not through one's actual movement but through one's ability to mobilize others" while Tommy's power "rests in his ability to transgress codes...irrespective of their consequences". Henry, ostensibly at the centre of GOODFELLAS, is displaced by an

alternative centre of Tommy and Jimmy into a position of powerlessness: “or a man continually on the move, Henry is hardly the agent of that movement”.

African American ‘Hood’ Films compiled by Stephen Gordon

Books

BERRY, Venice T. and MANNING-MILLER, Carmen L
Mediated messages and African American culture.
Sage, 1996. vii-xviii, 300p. tables. bibliogs. index.

This book examines the works by African Americans in popular music, film and television, bringing together the work of leading scholars and cultural theorists on a collection of topics from black men’s relationship with the police and the perpetual image of Afro-Americans as poor, violent and under-educated, to the films of Spike Lee and cultural engineering. The most relevant chapters in this book for research into gangsta/hood films is Chapter 3 by Jacquie Jones, ‘The New Ghetto Aesthetic and chapter 16, ‘Rap Music, Black Men, and the Police’, by Venice T Berry and Harold Looney Jr.

CRAIG WATKINS, S
Representing: hip-hop culture and the production of Black cinema.
University of Chicago Press, 1998. xiv, 314p. notes. bibliog. index.

‘Representing’ explores the ways in which popular culture dramatises the constantly shifting formations of race relations. The book attempts to highlight some of the salient features that organise the complex relationship between black youth, popular industrial image making and a rapidly evolving cultural landscape.

Craig Watkins is primarily interested in the filmmaking practices of African Americans but his analysis extends beyond this particular field and considers questions associated with the lived experience of black youth and to the political dynamics of popular culture in general. The period of black filmmaking Craig Watkins analyses is between 1986 and 1993.

The book is organised into three major chapters: Part 1 looks at how black youth cultural practices emerge not out of a vacuum, but emerge in relation to historically specific conditions. Part 2 looks at the complex series of discourses that have been constructed as a way to make sense of social, economic and political change in late 20th century America.

But it is Part 3 that will be most relevant as Craig Watkins shifts his discussion to the commercial film industry. The focus here moves on to the popularisation of films like John Singleton’s *BOYZ N THE HOOD* and the Hughes brother’s *MENACE II SOCIETY*. In particular Chapter 7 and the excellent section ‘The Gettocentric Imagination’ which considers to what extent filmmakers working in the ‘hood film’ genre create representations that actually challenge popular ideologies.

GUERRERO. Ed
Framing Blackness: the African American image in film.
Temple University Press, 1993. 255p. illus. bibliog. index.

This book examines the dialectic pressure of Hollywood’s dominant cultural construction of the black image and the resistance by an increasingly prominent black social consciousness. Guerrero argues; this push towards a more defined consciousness has thrust a number of black-focussed, independent films into the commercial cinematic marketplace.

The most relevant chapter for research into the 90s 'hood films' is Chapter 5 - 'Black Film in the 1990s - The New Black...'. In this chapter, Guerrero discusses the future of black cinema in the wake of films like John Singleton's *BOYZ N THE HOOD*, Mario Van Peebles' *NEW JACK CITY* and Ernest Dickerson's *JUICE*, which are all analysed in varied degrees in this chapter. Althusser, Freudian psychoanalysis and semiotics, as well as the work of black film critics and intellectuals such as Manthia Diawara, William Grier and Henry Louis Gates Jr influence Guerrero's analysis.

This is a well-written and engaging book that ceases to analyse black films in a linear way, and instead it offers a well-balanced context in which to understand the historical, political and social conditions from which the 'hood films' emerged.

KENDALL, Stephen. D

New Jack cinema: Hollywood's African American filmmakers.

J.L. Denser, 1994. xiv, 189p. bibliog. credits. box office figs. index.

New Jack Cinema offers an excellent base from which to begin your research into African-American 'hood films'. Although the book does not cover films like *MENACE II SOCIETY*, *CLOCKERS* or *BELLY* (due to the date of publication), Kendall's book does look at many other films influenced by the New Jack style. Films like Carl Franklin's *ONE FALSE MOVE*, Bill Duke's *DEEP COVER* and Joseph Vasquez's black/Hispanic venture *HANGIN' WITH THE HOMEBOYS*.

The book is split into three chapters and covers the years 1986 through to 1992. The sections on each film are short, informative and very good for taking notes. New Jack Cinema also has a list of production credits, filmographies, and box office statistics, as well as professional organisations and a list of black film festivals around the world. There are few books devoted purely to this genre so this is a must for beginning your research.

KENNEDY, Liam

Race and urban space in contemporary American culture.

Edinburgh University Press, 2000. xii, 178p. index.

This book looks at the representations of ethnic and racial identities in relation to the development of urban culture in post-industrialised American cities. Kennedy focuses on a range of literary and visual forms including novels, journalism, films and photography to examine the relationship between race and representation in the production of urban space.

The most useful chapter to look at for research into the gangsta/hood genre is on p.117, entitled 'The New Ghetto Cinema: Boyz N The Hood and Just Another Girl On The IRT'.

REID, Mark A.

Redefining Black film.

University of California Press, 1993. vi-x, 170p. illus. bibliog. indexes.

This book discusses two interrelated histories; black independent film production and black participation as writers and directors of black orientated films controlled by whites. Reid attempts to show how black independent film differs in many ways from black commercial film and argues that these two forms must not be mistaken for the same thing.

The most important chapter for research into the 'hood films' of the 90s is Chapter 7 - 'Male Directed New Black Independent Cinema'. This chapter focuses on the production process of black independent filmmaking between the 1970s and the 1990s, and how certain filmmakers, including John Singleton and Mario Van Peebles have created a particular form of 'black realism'.

OTHER USEFUL TITLES

BOGLE, Donald

Toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies and bucks: an interpretive history of Blacks in American films.

Roundhouse Publishing, 1994. 391p. illus. index.

DIWARA, Manthia

Black American cinema.

Routledge, 1993. 324p. bibliog. index.

MARTIN, Michael T.

Cinemas of the Black diaspora: diversity, dependence and oppositionality.

Wayne State University Press, 1995. 522p. tables. bibliog. index.

YEARWOOD, Gladstone L.

Black film as a signifying practice: cinema: narration and the African American aesthetic tradition.

African World Press, 2000. vii-ix, 263p. bibliog. index.

Journals Articles

SCREEN

vol.42 no4. Winter 2001, pp.363-381

'Worrying the note': mapping time in the gangsta film, by Jodi Brooks

This is an in-depth essay that focuses on the experience of 'time' as characterised in the contemporary 'gangsta' film. The essay argues that questions of time, memory and historical experience are at the base of the gangster film, from the stories structure and plot duration to its use of cinematographic techniques. Brooks argues that 'time' in the new 'gangsta' films is compressed and fractured and breaks from linearity. Whereas the Hollywood gangster films would recount the rise and fall of its main protagonist, the 'gangsta' film offers random moments of arrested time.

The essay goes on to discuss the way the Hollywood gangster film is used in *MENACE II SOCIETY* and *JUICE* where they operate didactically. Brooks also argues that the 'gangsta' film relationship with 'hip-hop culture is not merely connected by the films' use of the music in their soundtracks. Brooks quotes Trica Rose to point out that hip-hop, "plays with the temporal structuring of both the filmic and photographic image and their forms of temporal arrest, producing complex filmic 'beats'.

CAMERA OBSCURA

issue 15. 1995, pp.7-23

No way out of the menaced society: loyalty within the boundedness by race, by Grant Farred

Concentrating on *MENACE II SOCIETY*, and then moving on to 'New Jack Cinema' as a whole. Farred notes how the characters are seen as having absolutely no way out of their respective ghettos, and that the gangsta films are more about "local" politics rather than the bigger picture. Farred is particularly critical of the disempowerment of women on the films' narratives, where they are seen as the forces that lead the men to their violent fates.

THE VELVET LIGHT TRAP

no.35. Spring 1995, pp.19-32

Marginal marginalia: the African American voice in the nouvelle gangster film, by Mark Winokur

This potentially interesting article is, in Winokur's own words an attempt to "theorize the relationship" between the new gangster films, the audiences they're aimed at (and their histories), set against a background of the film industry as a whole. While Winokur has many enlightening points to make, good ideas tend to get lost in the theoretical weight of the writing.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.2 no.6. October 1992, pp.18-21

Out of the ghetto, by Michael Eric Dyson

This article looks at the fusion between ghetto and cultural naturalism, rap music and black male youth in the wake of two new releases, *JUICE* and *STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN*. Dyson analyses *BOYZ N THE HOOD*, *NEW JACK CITY* as well as *JUICE* and *STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN*. Dyson also points out the contradictions which underlie Van Peebles *NEW JACK CITY* with the casting of rapper Ice T, the impact and use of television in *JUICE* and the burden of representation placed upon Spike Lee's *MALCOLM X*.

Colors (1988) Dir. Dennis Hopper

Journal Articles

AMERICAN FILM

vol.13 no.5. March 1995, pp.19-22

Behind the scenes, by Bill Kelly

THE UNTOUCHABLES (both the TV series and the film version) looked at gang/organised crime from the perspective of the law, Dennis Hoppers *COLORS* takes on this mantle in contemporary America. This article is a Q & A style interview with director Dennis Hopper, who makes the point that this is a film about the police - not the gangs. Even so, the gangs - the Crips and the Bloods - remain integral to the film.

CITY LIMITS

10th November 1988, pp.10-12

Confessions from the crossfire, by Leon Bing

This is another article that discusses LA gang life on the eve of COLORS cinema release. This time an interview with a gang member crystallises the reality of gang membership in contrast to the celluloid version. At one point he is referred to as 'a soldier', a term intrinsically related to the Mafia use of the word.

The Q & A style (especially the questions) are rather pedestrian and sometimes mind bogglingly stupid as in; "do you like Eddie Murphy?" but the answers are direct, honest and indicative of the disillusionment of gang culture in LA.

TIME OUT

no. 915. 2nd March 1988, pp.20-21

Streets of fire, by Steve Grant

This article looks at the imminent release of Dennis Hopper's COLORS and oscillates between commentary, and factual statistics of gang crime, events and dialogue from the film.

Press Articles

NEW SOCIALIST

Oct-Nov 1988. pp.58-59

LA law 'n' order, by Duncan Webster

This is a short but very well written article that raises some interesting points about the politics of gang and drug culture missing from Hopper's film. Webster opens up debates on 'Reaganomics' (unemployment and welfare cutbacks) that he claims are the roots of the gang crimes depicted in the film and the link between the ghetto's drug trade and the use of drugs in the suburbs.

Webster also discusses the cinematography in COLORS (photographed by Haskell Wexler) that attempts to blur documentary style with fiction.

THE FACE

July-August 1988, pp. 42-47, 49

This is an in-depth article looking at the furore that surrounded the release of Dennis Hopper's COLORS. There are interviews with real gang members from The Crips and The Bloods, the gangs featured in the film who discuss candidly what their life is like on the streets of LA as well as quotes from Hopper.

THE SCOTSMAN

9th June 1988, p.13

Hollywood's young bloods stain the reputation of a city, by Brian Pendreigh

Another article that looks at the reception the film received after its release as well as accounts and statistics of real-life gang culture in LA.

VARIETY

20th April 1988, p.4, 26

Protests and cancellations attend opening of gang film 'Colors'

This is a report on the protest and the cancellations that preceded the opening of COLORS in the U.S. Includes interviews with theatre owners and protesters.

Boyz N The Hood (1991) Dir. John Singleton

Journal articles

THE VELVET LIGHT TRAP

no. 44. Fall 1999, pp.4-19

Screening race: responses to theater violence at New Jack City and Boyz N The Hood, by Laura Baker

This article looks at the American media's response to the audience violence that accompanied some of the first screenings of NEW JACK CITY and BOYZ N THE HOOD. Baker attempts to assess the way prevalent stereotypes of black youth were pathologised in media commentary to maintain the perception mainstream America has of what constitutes blackness.

The article then goes on to look at film market segregation and issues around theatrical exhibition and the distribution of the 'hood films in L.A.

CINEMA JOURNAL

vol.35 no.2. Winter 1996, pp.85-97

Mapping the hood: the genealogy of city space in Boyz N The Hood and Menace II Society, by Paula J. Massood

The city or city space has always acted as a site where the gangster film is played out and in this article Paula Massood traces some of the literary and cinematic legacies of Afro American city space and argues that the 'hood films' are largely determined by and entrenched in a multi-layered historical and cultural binarism - that of the city as both utopia and dystopia. This is a very well researched and referenced essay that will be very useful for research into the use of space in a cinematic framework.

THE VELVET LIGHT TRAP

no.38. Autumn 1996. pp. 14-27

On fathers and sons, sex and death: John Singleton's Boyz N The Hood, by Glen Masato Mimura

An extremely well written and thorough analysis of Singleton's BOYZ N THE HOOD which breaks down the films by elements into sections; 'A Pedagogy of Sexual Difference', 'The Father', 'Sexuality, Killing', Narrative Agents; 'Tre and Doughboy', and 'Doughboy's Tragedy as Narrative Contradiction'.

Mimura identifies a problem with the politics of black masculinity and the ways in which in BOYZ N THE HOOD it is lived but ultimately never 'outgrown', leaving a cycle of repetition. There are useful references to other essays and articles on Boyz and other 'hood films' within Mimura's critique.

CINEACTION

no.30. Winter 1992, pp.68-74

Gender and the construction of black masculinity in Boyz N The Hood,

by Rinaldo Walcott

A thorough critique of the films' gender politics that attempts to highlight what Walcott believes is one of the flaws in Singleton's film. The article raises many useful arguments concerning Singleton's approach to black masculinity and therefore, its affect on how women are portrayed. Walcott also looks at how masculine bonds are made, e.g. father-son-brother-friends, as well as one of the dominant threads throughout the film, violence.

I would argue that this article is perhaps slightly over critical in its assessment of black masculinity in BOYZ, but there are some useful quotes and some excellent references for further research.

CINEASTE

vol.18 no.4. December 1991, pp.16-19

Two takes on Boyz N The Hood, by Thomas Doherty and Jacquie Jones

An article that takes two different looks at Singleton's film.

Jacquie Jones examines the role of women in BOYZ N THE HOOD and argues that Singleton's film only depicts female characters as either barriers or burdens, and there only to symbolise the further oppression of black men in America. Jones continues by claiming that the 'hood films' have moved the gangster/gangsta genre in a different direction, but in BOYZ, the linear thread that links this film to previous Hollywood gangster films is the role of the female characters.

Thomas Doherty dissects some of the films key narratives and ultimately come to the conclusion that a 'yearning for a strong black male role model' is what comes through with the most clarity. This assessment is backed by quotes from director John Singleton.

Press Articles

THE VOICE

29th October 1991, pp.12-13

That's entertainment, by Lloyd Bradley

This article looks at the changing role of black directors in the light of a wave of new black films that show situations and character progression that exists beyond simply their relation to the white majority. There are comments on both Singleton and Van Peebles, the way they approached subjects such as drugs and poverty in the black community.

TIME OUT

16th October 1991, p.22

Ghetto, by Denis Campbell

This article interviews director John Singleton who discusses his belief that BOYZ is a critique of the conditions that have reduced South Central to a ghetto, more than a critique on its inhabitants. Singleton goes on to explain how the corporate millions which flowed into black films after the success of Spike Lee's SHE'S GOTTA HAVE IT and DO THE RIGHT THING is what enable BOYZ to get made.

VILLAGE VOICE

17.09.91. pp 34-36, 38-43

Black like who? Notes on African American Identity,

by bell hooks, Lisa Kennedy, Julius Lester, Joan Morgan, Greg Tate, Michell Wallace, Cornell West and Joe Wood.

A very lengthy but informative article looking at African American identity by some of the most respected cultural commentators in the U.S. Subjects include discussions on the theory of 'black rage' - an unadulterated rage directed toward American society by Cornell West. The 'body question' by Lisa Kennedy that discusses the idea of a collective body of black experience, which she disputes, claiming, there is more than one collective body roaming around the American landscape. This argument is encapsulated in films like BOYZ N THE HOOD, where one strand of the black experience in America is shown, yet this is not the definitive.

This article is well worth researching as it offers some well-rounded arguments and a context from where discussions on the impact of the 'hood films' can begin.

New Jack City (1991) Dir. Mario Van Peebles

Journal Articles

BLACK FILM REVIEW

vol. 6 no.4. 1991, pp.10-11, 19

Crime and punishment, by Jacquie Jones

Article that looks at the impact of Mario Van Peebles' NEW JACK CITY, using quotes from Van Peebles himself. Alternatively, Jones claims that for all its anti-drug stance, NEW JACK CITY embodies all the schizophrenia of black Hollywood by branding screenwriter Barry Cooper's 'New Jack' world with the classic Warner's prohibition gangsters. This is a point that Van Peebles bears out in the Q & A interview, which this article also contains.

Press Articles

THE GUARDIAN

29th August 1991, p.23

Gunning for the drug..., by Tim Palleine

This is a brief article that looks at the moral fibre that lies at the heart of NEW JACK CITY. The film's drug lord (Nino Brown) may escape justice via a loophole in the law, but he cannot escape the wrath of the people. Palleine also discusses NEW JACK CITY's link to traditional films in the gangster genre from the 30s and 40s.

TIME OUT

28th August 1991, pp.22-23

It's a rap, by Alex McGregor

Interview with director Mario Van Peebles that has some useful quotes about the position of black films and the 'new wave' of black filmmakers.

THE VOICE

20th August 1991, p.22

The Colour Of Money by Deidrie Forbes

Interview with NEW JACK CITY director Mario Van Peebles who discusses the controversy that has surrounded his film since its release. Van Peebles argues that the controversy comes from the media's fear and apprehension at seeing black characters in positions of power. Van Peebles makes the point that unlike THE UNTOUCHABLES, SCARFACE or THE GODFATHER, his film has a multiracial cast and was not made at the expense of any other racial community.

THE SUNDAY TIMES MAGAZINE

28th July 1991, pp. 18, 20-21

Why Ice T is taking the rap, by Richard Guillatt

This article looks at the opening of Mario Van Peebles' NEW JACK CITY and has an interview with the rapper/hip-hop artist and star of NEW JACK CITY, Ice T. T reflects on his own gangster background and the blurring between screen fictions and street reality.

Guillatt also looks at the violence that appeared to follow the screening of NEW JACK CITY. Director Van Peebles disputes that the violence was related to his film, claiming it was a reaction to the Rodney King beating that occurred a week prior to his films release. Van Peebles claims that NEW JACK CITY was used by the media to, "freeze out other positive black films".

VILLAGE VOICE

19th March 1991, p.49

The reel deal: New Jack City, a gangsta chronicle, by Playthell Benjamin

This is a very well written article that reviews the film a week into its release. What is interesting here is the only mention of the theatre violence that accompanied the film on its release is at the very end of this piece, and then it only questions the effects it may have on the films box office takings.

Benjamin discusses where the term 'New Jack' derives and how it has been appropriated into the music as well as the style. This style is embodied throughout the film.

THE TIMES

18th March 1991, p. 8

U.S. film stirs up black culture of death, by Charles Bremner

What is interesting about this article is that it appears to follow an almost generic way of reporting black on black gang violence in America. Without any first hand contact with any of the cast or crew from the film, Bremner's article seems to stand well back and survey the wreckage and only some of its causes. However it is a useful example of the media in Britain's moral panic concerning all things black and foreign during this period.

Straight Out of Brooklyn (1991) Dir. Matty Rich

Journal Articles

THIRD TEXT

no.34. Spring 1996, pp.3-14

'Searing portraits': the persistence of realism in black urban cinema, by Elizabeth Mermin

A very well written and informative article that examines the cinematic strategies of the nineties black urban cinema and the way these films use expectations of cinematic realism and thus, created a genre.

Mermin looks at two films, Charles Burnett's, KILLER OF SHEEP (1977) and Matty Rich's, STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN. Whilst discussing Rich's film, Mermin makes the point that in the nineties the ghetto films leapt into Hollywood as a hybrid between pseudo-documentary and gangster film. This fusion, Mermin argues, is integral to the nineties 'hood movie' genre.

BLACK FILM REVIEW

vol.6 no. 4. 1991, pp. 24-25

Straight up and out, by Olive Vassell

Article that looks at how 19 year-old director Matty Rich, despite no formal training, defied the odds to complete his first feature.

Juice (1992) Dir. Ernest Dickerson

Press Articles

DAILY MAIL

22nd March 1994, pp. 14-15

Laughing killers fuelled by Juice, by Chris Brooke

A sensationalist article that was written after the murder of 44 year-old father of three, Les Reed. The report claims that the four youths convicted of Mr Reeds murder were 'under the influence' of the "video nasty" entitled JUICE. Dickerson's film is compared to the film CHILDS PLAY, in another case where a video/ film was held up as influencing a murder. This article could be useful for research into moral panics in Britain.

THE TIMES

22nd March 1994, p.5

Cult video blamed over killing, by Richard Duce

Similar article to the Daily Mail's on the murder of 44 year old Mr Reed which is claimed to have been influenced by the "cult movie" JUICE.

Menace II Society (1993) Dir. Albert Hughes

Journal Articles

SCREEN

no.39. Spring 1998, pp.36-52

Raising Caine in a down Eden: Menace II Society and the death of signifyin(g),
by James Mckelly

This article is a thorough, yet sometimes over-complicated re-reading of MENACE II SOCIETY. However it is a useful piece to study as from the outset Mckelly positions the issues of the film within a biblical framework.

Mckelly claims, "the biblical story of Eden serves as a culturally archetypical parable concerning the social relation of power, knowledge, disobedience and identity". Mckelly sees Cain (Cain and Abel), as the antecedent to MENACE's main protagonist, ironically, or not, called Caine, as they are both banished (Cain) /marginalized (Caine) from Eden/LA respectively, and rendered to stay East of Eden in the case of Cain and South Central in the situation Caine finds himself in MENACE.

There are also useful comparisons made between MENACE II SOCIETY and John Singleton's BOYZ N THE HOOD, decried by the Hughes Brothers as MARY POPPINS compared to MENACE. There are also comparisons made with De Palma's SCARFACE and Scorsese's MEAN STREETS, as is frequently the case with MENACE.

Useful quotes and references can be found including Foucault's Discipline and Punishment, Frederic Jameson's, Postmodernism and Baudrillard's Simulacra and Simulation, as well as books and articles by African American cultural theorists.

ARTRAGE

Feb-March 1994

Menace II Society, by T.R.U.T.H.

A brief article on the Hughes Brothers seminal 'hood film' MENACE II SOCIETY which attempts to breakdown the plot of the film and underlines the difference an 'unhappy' ending makes to a film which essentially tries to portray, "true, day to day life in Watts".

CINEASTE

vol.20 no.2. 1993, pp.44-45

Menace II Society, by Paula Massood

This article offers a concise summation of some of the key elements in the Hughes Brothers *MENACE II SOCIETY*. Massood (who also wrote an excellent piece on *BOYZ N THE HOOD*) makes clear her view that although *MENACE* works well in contesting the ease with which previous films like *BOYZ N THE HOOD* and *STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN* define the powerful father figure as salvation for young black man in the 'hood', the film ultimately falls into the same generic trap laid down by traditional Hollywood gangster films.

Massood argues that the film's climax fails to move away from its position as a morality play. Despite their attempt to split conventional storytelling structures, Massood argues that with the slaying of Caine, the Hughes Brothers did not allow his actions to go unpunished, thus *MENACE* falls into classic Hollywood territory, from *PUBLIC ENEMY* to *SCARFACE*.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol 3. no.8. August 1993, pp.16-17

Girl n the hood, by Amy Taubin

This brief critique looks at the potential impact of the Hughes Brothers *MENACE II SOCIETY* and makes reference to the influence the gangster genre has on the film. In particular, Martin Scorsese's *MEAN STREETS*, and Brian De Palma's, *SCARFACE*. Also discussed is the cinematography in *MENACE*, a mix of hand-held verite with expressionist lighting, which owes a lot to the influence of these two films.

There is also a critique on Leslie Harris's low budget, cautionary comedy about teenage pregnancy, *JUST ANOTHER GIRL ON THE IRT*.

Clockers (1995) Dir. Spike Lee

Journal Articles

CREATIVE SCREENWRITER

vol.6 no3. May/June 1999, pp.32-35

Clockers, by Robert Arnett

Arnett looks at how *CLOCKERS* has transferred from novel to screenplay. Although this article has no critical analysis, it breaks down the film's plot and storyline to its basic premise and could be useful as a foundation for constructing a good critical analysis. There are extracts from the script and references to parts of the book that have been omitted for the film.

CINEASTE

vol. 22. no.1. April 1996, pp.9-17

Spike Lee's Clockers: a lament for the urban ghetto, by Leonard Quart

This article looks at the complexity of Spike Lee's *CLOCKERS*, the subject matter and the position of Lee's film alongside the so-called 'ghettocentric hood films' of Singleton, Van Peebles and the Hughes brothers. Quarts argues that Lee's film had little interest in

sustaining the 'hood genre'; rather, it wanted to "drive a nail in the coffin" of those films. Quart continues by discussing how CLOCKERS, like BOYZ N THE HOOD and MENACE II SOCIETY examined the pressures of black male adolescence, but Lee's film avoids the racial rhetoric and political sloganism and offers a balanced view where cops are both cynical and contemptuous with no easy rationalisations for the destructive lives of its leading protagonists.

The article goes on to question why Singleton's BOYZ N THE HOOD and the Hughes brothers MENACE II SOCIETY attracted such large audiences, whereas Lee's film remained fairly low key. Quarts argues that CLOCKERS never attempted to pander to the 'traditional hood' formation and is quite restrained and contemplative, avoiding the 'shoot em up' style or the over sentimentality that could be labelled at both MENACE II SOCIETY and BOYZ N THE HOOD respectively.

Belly (1998) Dir. Hype Williams

Journal Articles

BLACK FILM BULLETIN

vol .7 issue 2. Summer 1999, pp. 9-10

Belly, by Allister Harry

This article interviews Hype Williams, director of the gangsta' film BELLY. Williams, already a prolific Hip-Hop and R & B video director for the likes of Busta Rhymes and Missy Elliot discusses his first attempt at a feature and the difficulties that arose during the shooting. Williams talks about the irony he incurred when former basketball star Magic Johnson refused to show BELLY at any of the cinemas he owns (which are for the specific purpose of screening black orientated films for the black community) because of what he felt was the films "overwhelmingly negative and violent depiction of African Americans".

Williams also discusses his use of hip-hop and R & B stars in the leading roles. This could be a useful example to look at for discussing the blurring that occurs between real and fictitious depictions of African Americans in film.

Press Articles

THE GUARDIAN: SECTION 2

29th June 1999, pp.10-11

Believe The Hype, by Allister Harry

Interview with director Hype Williams that only briefly discusses his film BELLY, preferring to concentrate on Williams career as director of music promos. Williams admits the fact that the gap between the films intention and its reception after release was wider than he had anticipated.

THE GUARDIAN: THE GUIDE

26th June 1999, p.15

Believe The Hype, by Danny Leigh

This is a Q & A style interview with director Hype Williams who discusses the criticism the film received from critics in the States as well as his spat with former basketball star Magic

Johnson. Williams talks about what kind of films influenced him on the making of BELLY and what his intentions were for the lead female characters in the film.

British Gangsters

compiled by Ayesha Khan

Books

CHIBNALL, Steve and MURPHY, Robert (eds.)

British crime cinema.

Routledge, 1999. vi-x, 215p. illus. filmog. index.

This study of the crime genre in British filmmaking is essential to anyone studying the subject. This book provides an overview of the subject and examines a number of the key films; tracing the history of the British crime genre, from one of critical neglect to its newly found 'cool'. In terms of critiquing certain films it is stronger at looking at films from the 1960's and beyond than in the preceding years with films such as GET CARTER and PERFORMANCE being particularly well represented and other films such as THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY being used as examples.

BARR, Charles (ed.)

All our yesterdays: 90 years of British cinema.

British Film Institute, 1986. 446p. illus. bibliog. filmog. index.

In a chapter entitled 'Riff-Raff: British crime cinema and the underworld', Robert Murphy details the history of British crime cinema up to the 1950's. In particular he highlights the problems filmmakers had with the BBFC and contemporary newspapers that frowned upon the depiction of anything too realistic.

CATTERALL, Ali and WELLS, Simon

Your face here: British cult movies since the Sixties.

Fourth Estate, 2001. xvi, 282p. filmog. bibliog. index.

An essential book for those studying PERFORMANCE, GET CARTER and LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS. Written by people clearly enthusiastic about the films, each film is given its own chapter in which the films histories are written in detail, with more than a fair amount of fascinating anecdotal information.

LANDY, Marcia

British genres: cinema and society, 1930-1960.

Princeton University Press, 1991. 553p. [24] plates. filmog. bibliog. index.

Though not specifically about gangster films, the chapter on the Social Problem film includes some discussion on BRIGHTON ROCK and other crime films from the time. Landy describes the 'Social Problem' film as being the "dramatization of topical social issues" with these films combining a dramatic storyline with social analyses. In post WWII Britain issues of concern included poverty, delinquency, crime and punishment (amongst others). This academic text provides an essential overview of British film genres and society.

MURPHY, Robert (ed.)

The British cinema book (2nd ed).

bfi Publishing, 2001. xii, 336p. illus. notes. bibliog. index.

This excellent, comprehensive book refers to all the British films case studied in this pack. In particular, the chapter '*Travels in ladland: the British gangster film cycle 1998-2001*' offers an intelligent perspective on genre and the films in general; examining in particular the condemnation the recent cycle of British gangster films attracted.

MURPHY, Robert

Realism and tinsel: cinema and society in Britain 1939-1948.

Routledge, 1989. 278p. illus. bibliog. index.

This book includes a chapter entitled 'The Spiv cycle' that examines the British post-war crime films of the 1940's, including BRIGHTON ROCK. and the depiction of crime in British films of the period generally.

Journal Articles

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.10 no.6. June 2000, pp.22-25

Get smarter, by Danny Leigh

Leigh describes the current gangster films from the last couple of years as "doe-eyed gangster fetishists" that seem to be more interested in nostalgia (aping GET CARTER and THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY) than in anything resembling reality.

SCREEN INTERNATIONAL

no.1263. 16th June 2000, p.9

Business to business: genre gangsters, by Leon Forde

Focussing on the marketing of GANGSTER NO.1 and SEXY BEAST, Forde looks at the difficulties of selling these films both in the UK and abroad and how the market has changed.

JOURNAL OF POPULAR BRITISH CINEMA

no.1. 1998, pp.76-80

When the gangs came to Britain: the post war British crime film, by Andrew Clay

This article looks at the development of the British crime film from the 1930's though to the early 1960's, and examines how they were developing their own identity in comparison to the American gangster films. Provides a valuable understanding of the subject.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.8 no.4. April 1998, pp.18-21

Riff-raff realism, by Peter Wollen

Examining what is termed as the 'spiv-cycle' of post war British films. Describing it as "a mutation in the traditional crime film in response to the changing pattern of crime". A product of WWII, spivs were treated with the same ambivalence as American gangsters and Wollen goes on to analyse some of the films from the period.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.7 no.10. October 1997, pp.10-12

East End heat, by Bob McCabe

Primarily an interview with the director, Antonia Bird about her film FACE. Touches upon British gangster films in general. Though not essential in the study of the subject it is rare to find a woman filmmaker involved in the genre.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.6 no.8. August 1996, pp.22-24

Smart guys, by Iain Sinclair

An intriguing account of the blurring between life and art as Sinclair takes a tour through the world of the Kray Twins and their famous friends.

EMPIRE

no.63. September 1991

You dirty chap!, by Kim Newman

Though brief, this straightforward article gives a good overview of the history and background of British gangster films.

Brighton Rock (1947) Dir. John Boulting

Journal Articles

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.4 no.4 April 1994, p.53

Brighton Rock, by Geoffrey Macnab

Macnab notes that upon its original release, BRIGHTON ROCK had been criticised as being a poor imitation of the American gangster films, that offered “an unpleasant and inaccurate view of the British”. However, Macnab argues that in retrospect BRIGHTON ROCK looks very British and can be seen as typical of British gangster films. This review offers an interesting reassessment of the film.

LITERATURE/FILM QUARTERLY

vol.2 no.4 Autumn 1974, pp.373-378

Brighton Rock/Young Scarface, by David S. Lenfest

This essay focuses on BRIGHTON ROCK as an adaptation by Graham Greene from his own novel rather than as a gangster film. Though interesting comparisons are made between Richard Attenborough’s characterisation of Pinkie to that of a “young and tacky James Cagney”.

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

vol.14 no.168 December 1947, pp.170-171

Brighton Rock

This fairly brief and negative review of the film criticises it as a work of adaptation, though the actors' performances are praised.

Press Articles

THE GUARDIAN

20th July 2002, pp.14-15

Mad, bad and dangerous to know, by Jake Arnott

This article gives a concise overview of the film, taking in the Catholicism, psychosexuality and Englishness of the film. Includes an interesting critique of the character of Pinkie Brown, and the real-life gangs that influenced the story.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

19th April 1997, p.3

Brilliant and bad in Brighton, by Quentin Falk

A review of a television screening of BRIGHTON ROCK, that focuses on the casting of Richard Attenborough as Pinkie Brown, despite initial doubts by the author and screenplay writer, Graham Greene.

TIME OUT

23rd April 1997, p.7

A rock and a hard place, by Geoffrey Macnab

A brief but illuminating feature on the background to the film that touches on Attenborough's performance, BRIGHTON ROCK's place in the post-war 'Spiv' films and the directorial style of the Boulting Brothers.

INDEPENDENT

2nd January 1993, pp.26-27

Pinkie: out on the dangerous edge of things, by John Carey

Concentrating on the book rather than the film, this is an excellent article about the inspirations behind BRIGHTON ROCK. Carey looks at the real-life crimes and characters that provided Graham Greene with ideas as well as looking at the background and character of Greene himself, and how his attitudes were worryingly sympathetic to those of his anti-hero Pinkie. There is also a discussion of the ending of the book versus the ending of the film.

TIME

12th November 1951

Young Scarface, by A. I.

BRIGHTON ROCK was not released in America until 1951 where it was given the new name of 'Young Scarface'. This scathing review from US magazine Time, describes the film as being like "a second-rate US crime melodrama".

EVENING STANDARD

9th January 1948

This takes the guilt off, by Margaret Lane

Despite calling the themes of the film are "petty, ugly, sordid, mean", Lane praises the film for its honesty and lack of glamour not usually found in gangster films.

DAILY MIRROR

9th January 1948

Razor-slasher film is defended by the man who wrote the book.

Graham Greene's dignified reply to Reg Whitley's attack on the film. Both articles make for interesting and entertaining reading.

DAILY MIRROR

8th January 1948

False, nasty: is this what you want to see?, by Reg Whitley

Whitley's strongly worded review condemns the film as "false, cheap, nasty sensationalism". Other writers when examining the film often quote his review.

Performance (1970) Dir. Donald Cammell

Books

BROWN, Mick

Performance: pocket movie guide 6.

Bloomsbury, 2000. 234p. bibliog.

This guide takes the form of an A-Z listing of characters from the film, and people actually involved or who influenced the making of the film. Some of the stories told provide a fascinating account of the times.

DONNELLY, K. J. (ed.)

Film music: critical approaches.

Edinburgh University Press, 2001. viii, 214p. music scores.

In the chapter titled 'Performance and the composite film score', Donnelly highlights the central role music plays in the film. While it delves into the making of the film, as is to be expected considering the book's subject matter, there is no discussion of gangsters.

MACCABE, Colin

Performance.

British Film Institute, 1998. 87p. illus (some col.). bibliog.

Describing it as “the finest British gangster film ever made” this is an essential study of the film. Taking in all aspects of its production and having conducted interviews with many of the key players MacCabe paints a vivid picture of the making of the film and its aftermath.

RAKOFF, Ian

Inside the prisoner: radical television and film in the 1960’s.

B. T. Batsford, 1998. 192p. illus. bibliog. index.

PERFORMANCE only gets two brief mentions in this book, but one of them throws light on the working relationship between Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg.

SALWOLKE, Scott

Nicolas Roeg: film by film.

McFarland, 1993. v-ix, 222p. illus. bibliog. filmog. index.

Each chapter of this book is devoted to Nic Roeg’s films in chronological order. The first chapter on PERFORMANCE concentrates more on the themes and ideas of the film than how it was made. Salwolke provides an interesting critique of the film.

SWAIN, John

Bleeding images: Performance and the British gangster movie.

British Film Institute/Birkbeck College MA.

Though predominantly focusing on PERFORMANCE, Swain’s dissertation also takes in other films such as GET CARTER and THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY. Swain notes how PERFORMANCE both embodies and deconstructs the British gangster genre. It examines the influence of the American gangster films and real-life influences such as The Kray’s with a lot of the emphasis of Swain’s dissertation placed on the idea of the ‘mirror-image’ and how this is a factor in both the films and real-life counterparts. This is an interesting and thought-provoking examination of the film.

Press Articles

THE INDEPENDENT

1st May 1998, pp.8-10

What a great performance, by Geoffrey Macnab

This feature focuses on the co-director and screenwriter of PERFORMANCE, Donald Cammell. Starting with the possible reasons for his suicide in 1996, this article looks back on his life and career (and in particular PERFORMANCE). The film is described as “a moment when the art world, the gay world, the gangster world and the high society world all seem to overlap”.

THE GUARDIAN

16th October 1997, pp.9

Total recall, nearly, by Steven Severin

An interview with Anita Pallenberg (Pherber) about the making of *PERFORMANCE* and her life subsequently. Severin and Pallenberg make many interesting reflections on the film and the 1960's.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

3rd June 1998, pp.24, 27-28, 30

Performance was the film that blew the minds of everyone who saw it..., by Mick Brown

An exhaustive and compelling account of the making of *PERFORMANCE*; the people involved and its aftermath. Thoroughly recommended for anyone studying the film.

EVENING STANDARD

13th October 1997, p.50

Sympathy for the devilish, by Max Bell

A brief preview of a screening of *PERFORMANCE* at the ICA. Covers a lot of the same ground as many other articles.

THE GUARDIAN

9th September 1993, p.6

The intruders within, by Richard Combs

Combs describes *PERFORMANCE* as a "singular event in British cinema" and goes on to compare the film with other British films, including *THE LADYKILLERS* and *THE SERVANT*. Provides an interesting perspective of the film and post-war British cinema.

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS

3rd January 1971

Performance, by Richard Barkley

A review that actually focuses for the main part on the gangsters and criminals of the film rather than on the events in Turner's (Mick Jagger's) flat. While not applauding the style of the film Barkley contends that the film is an ambitious contrast between "the assertive criminal and the passive drop-out".

NEW SOCIETY

21st January 1971

Jugglers, by Michael Wood

Describing the film as a "mishmash...of fashionable and uncontrolled ideas about sex, art, music and violence"; this critical review of the film ends with Wood stating, "What is wrong with *Performance* is not its loving attention to a gangster, but the lofty and literary and metaphysical nature of that attention".

THE GUARDIAN

28th January 1971

Performance: an open letter from Warner Bros., by Myron D. Karlin

As a Managing Director and vice-President at Warner Bros., Karlin writes in to complain that Warner Brothers has been mis-represented in an interview by Derek Malcolm with Donald Cammell and Nicholas Roeg. Describing it as a “grossly unfair attack” and that contrary to all reports Warner Brothers had always fully supported the film and the filmmakers.

THE GUARDIAN

12th January 1971

What a performance, by Derek Malcolm

An article praising the film and filmmakers but criticises Warner Brothers attitude and treatment towards the film. Includes quotes from Donald Cammell and Nicholas Roeg.

EVENING STANDARD

1st January 1971

Jagger’s drop-out evil wrapped in a kaftan, by Alexander Walker

Walker argues against the moral vacuity of PERFORMANCE describing it as “the outcome of an over developed visual sense and an under developed moral one”. Interesting for Alexander Walker’s style and tone of writing.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

8th January 1971

Performance, by Patrick Gibbs

A positive review of the film. Gibbs notes that the gangsters in the film remind him of Chicago in the 1930’s rather than “present day London”.

Journal Articles

AMERICAN CINEMATOGRAPHER

vol.79 no.11. November 1998, p.120

Wrap shot, by Andrew O. Thompson

This article focuses more on Nicholas Roeg’s cinematography in PERFORMANCE and how it complements the narrative (or “non-linear narrative”) of the film.

NEON

March 1998, pp.108-113

The acid house, by Rebekah Wood

A concise overview of PERFORMANCE, including quotes from most of those involved in the making of the film. Includes some of the reviews of the film and what else was happening in

the film industry when it was released in 1970. This feature is a good starting place for anyone studying the film.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.5 no.9. September 1995, pp.24-25

Turning into wonders, by Jon Savage

This is primarily an article about Christopher Gibbs who is credited as being the design consultant for Turner's house in *PERFORMANCE* and looks at the real-life mixing of high and low life of the 1960's that influenced the film.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.3 no.5. May 1993, pp.14-18

Snapshots of the Sixties, by Jon Savage

Savage looks at the mixing of pop music and films of the 1960's, he examines *A HARD DAY'S NIGHT*, *CATCH US IF YOU CAN*, *BLOW-UP* and *PERFORMANCE*. Savage states that *PERFORMANCE* is the "greatest" of all four, both visually and narratively. Unfortunately, while this is an interesting article for the period context, it is not especially useful if you are studying the film purely with gangsters in mind.

EMPIRE

no.52 October 1993, pp.112-113

Hipper than the rest, by Mat Snow

This brief article recounts the turbulent making of *PERFORMANCE* and the lasting effects it had on various members of the cast. Includes interesting pieces of "gossip" about the film.

LITERATURE/FILM QUARTERLY

vol.5 no.2. Spring 1977, pp.147-153

Performance and Jorge Luis Borges, by Joseph A. Gomez

Though an interesting critique of the connection between *PERFORMANCE* and the writings of Jorge Luis Borges, it may not be useful to anyone studying the film as part of the gangster genre. However, the piece does include contemporary criticisms from the film's release, such as John Simon's "The most loathsome film of all?".

TAKE ONE

vol.4 no.1. September/October 1972, pp.12-18

Redemption and performance, by Bill Nichols

A theoretical critique of the film that explores the themes of the film in detail, especially that of redemption.

FILM HERITAGE

vol.6 no.3. Spring 1971, pp.1-6 + 36

Underground chic: Performance, by Foster Hirsch

This article reviews the film as the product of the counter-culture and appears to echo the confusion that many felt towards the film. It notes that from an American perspective the film “has trespassed beyond what many...are willing to allow as reasonable and entertaining”.

FILMS AND FILMING

vol.17 no.7. April 1971, pp.48-49

Performance, by Gordon Gow

In a review full of praise for the film, Gow alludes to the element of gangs and gangsters in the film. He notes how the first half of the film “superficially” echoes the classic 1930’s gangster films, such as LITTLE CAESAR, describing them as “controlled allusions”. Gow goes on to observe how the film progresses from the gangsters to something darker.

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

vol.38 no.445 February 1971, pp.27-28

Performance, by Jan Dawson

In this enthusiastic review, Dawson looks at the concept of identity within the film, especially between Chas and Turner and how this is re-enforced both visually and musically. She also notes how the film seems to start off as a straightforward gangster film, but then halfway through becomes something more surreal.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.40 no.1 Winter 1970/71, pp.67-69

Performance, by Philip French

Philip French’s article is one of few to focus on PERFORMANCE as a “crime movie” and one where the narrative is a re-working of the Hollywood theme of ‘criminals on the run’. He goes on to describe the film as “the most authentic the cinema has given us of organised crime in Britain”.

TIME OUT

9th January 1971, pp.25-29

Mick Jagger: ‘It was taken for granted that I would do anything’

In this interview, Mick Jagger talks about his involvement in film. An interesting contemporary account that benefits from the hindsight of time.

CINEMA

vol.6 no.2. Fall 1970, pp.16-21

Performance: the nightmare journey, by Stephen Farber

Opening his article by looking at other American ‘youth films’ of the time, such as, WOODSTOCK and EASY RIDER and comparing them with PERFORMANCE, Farber dissects the

film in detail, especially the sexuality and violence of the characters. He concludes that while both PERFORMANCE and WOODSTOCK share an “optimism”, PERFORMANCE is deemed to provide a more disturbing vision for the future.

INTERVIEW

vol.1 no.2 1969, p.3

Mick Jagger in Performance, by Wheeler Dixon

A short review that claims the film is self-conscious and generally a “pretty poor film”. Despite the negative review, this is still worth reading as it is reviewed with other films and gives an impression of how contemporary counter-culture figures may have viewed the film.

Get Carter (1971) Dir. Mike Hodges

Books

Though there do not seem to be any books about GET CARTER (at the time of compilation), it does get a mention in all the general texts that cover British crime or gangster films.

HODGES, Mike

Get Carter.

ScreenPress Books, 1999. 61p.

A screenplay of the film.

Journal Articles

EMPIRE

no.138. December 2000, pp.124-130

Number one gangster, by Clark Collis

Essentially an interview with the director of GET CARTER, Mike Hodges, and Michael Caine about the making of the film. Their reminiscences provide useful background information to the film. Hodges and Caine both emphasise how they wanted to make the film and characters as realistic as possible and true to the working class roots of the story. There is also an additional piece about the remake of the film starring Sylvester Stallone.

CREATIVE SCREENWRITING

vol.7 no.5. September/October 2000, p.18

Script comment: Get Carter (2000), by Christian Divine

Divine compares and contrasts the Michael Caine and Sylvester Stallone versions of GET CARTER. Using examples from both screenplays, Divine concludes that Stallone’s Carter is too much the “noble hood” compared to Caine’s “awful thug”. Divine ends his brief article with the memorable line “It’s the difference between a razor blade and an electric shaver”.

FILM COMMENT

vol.36 no.5. September/October 2000, p.35

Brute force, by Graham Fuller

Written primarily for an American audience, this article gives an overview of GET CARTER, which in particular highlights its “Britishness” and why the film is enjoying a renaissance nearly thirty years after its release. Fuller begins by stating that the film is “the apex of post-sixties British crime films”. However, Fuller is at pains to point out, that to re-characterise the film as a “celebration of underworld chic” is to misrepresent it. Fuller also picks up on GET CARTER’s noir sensibilities in terms of its structure and narrative.

CLASSIC TELEVISION

no.4. April/May 1998, p.30

Now take me back to London, by John Matthews

Looking in particular at the dialogue of the film, Matthews notes that for GET CARTER most of it is “simple phrases said with just the right hint of menace”. A brief but interesting article.

FILM REVIEW

November 1996, pp.44-47

Call sheet: Get Carter, by Howard Maxford

An account of the making of GET CARTER, that covers many of the topics the film raises, such as violence, the characters and location. At the start of the article, however, is a very useful explanation of how the maker’s of the film had perceived the portrayal of gangsters in earlier British films and how they wanted a change from this.

STILLS

May/June 1986, p.154

Razor’s edge, by Peter Richards

GET CARTER is featured on the censoring of films for television.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.40 no.2. Spring 1971, p.107

Get Carter, by Tom Milne

Milne argues that while GET CARTER is a good film with good characters, it lacks the mystery and charisma of the earlier American crime films he feels it’s trying to emulate. He also states that the motivations of Jack Carter are too ambivalent – veering towards either being an avenging angel or an “authentic post-permissive anti-hero, revelling in the casual sadism”.

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

vol.38 no.447. April 1971, p.73

Get Carter, by Nigel Andrews

Andrews describes GET CARTER as “perfunctory” and that it relies on the cliché of “homosexual chauffeur, bloated tycoon, glamorous mistress” to characterise the British underworld it is meant to portray.

FILMS AND FILMING

vol.17 no.8. May 1971, p.88

Get Carter, by Richard Weaver

In his review of the film, Weaver praises the realism of the film, describing it as “crime at its most blatant”.

Press Articles

NEW STATESMAN

14th June 1999, pp.38-39

Criminal past, by Jonathan Romney

While Romney notes that recently GET CARTER has been enveloped by a “geezer-mag fetishisation” like LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS (a reputation he believes it partly deserves), it is still an “outstanding...evocation” of place and time. Showing uniquely British landscapes of North and South, prosperity and decay that now looks like “regional archaeology”.

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

6th June 1999, p.1 and 4

England, noir England, by David Thomson

An article that views noir as essentially English; while American noir films have “panache” and style, British noir films are more “an extension of social realism” and are more reflective of British life and culture. Starting with GET CARTER, Thomson highlights a lot of well-known British films to support his argument, including, THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY, BLOW-UP, David Lean’s OLIVER TWIST and others.

NEW STATESMAN

29th August 1997, p.40

British gangsters, by Jonathan Coe

A re-evaluation of GET CARTER in comparison with British gangster movies of the 1990’s and why the film has stood the test of time. An interesting and thorough feature that places the film in context of when it was made and it’s lasting influence.

TIME OUT

14th July 1993, p.143

Cinefile, by Brian Case

Looking at the reasons why GET CARTER works as a film, Case particularly highlights Michael Caine's performance. Contrary to Thomson's point of view in *England, noir England* he states that the film is closer to America's pulp tradition and therefore is atypically British. The article also mentions PERFORMANCE and THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY in assessing the film.

The Long Good Friday (1979) Dir. John Mackenzie

Books

Most of the material on THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY can be found either in general texts on British crime cinema, or in journal and newspaper articles.

KEEFFE, Barrie

The long Good Friday.

Methuen, 1984. 45p. illus.

In the introduction to this screenplay, Barrie Keeffe lists in detail the events of the previous five years it took to get the film made from page to screen.

Journal Articles

NEON

July 1998, pp.108-113

East End boys, by Gareth Grundy

An account of the making of the film, with quotes from all the key people involved. This also includes some reviews of the film from the time of its release in the cinema and what else was happening in 1981.

FILM REVIEW

February 1998, pp.56-61

Call sheet: The long Good Friday, by Robert Sellers

Sellers gives a detailed but entertaining account of the making of the film, the inspiration behind it and problems the filmmakers had with their initial backer Lord Grade and how they had to buy back the film to stop it being cut and shown on television instead of being given a theatrical release. This is a useful article for anyone wishing to read a concise account of the making of the film.

EMPIRE

no.101. November 1997, pp.120-126

“For the Italian job!”, by Adam Smith

A group of critics and journalists choose from thirty-two films to decide which are the best British films. The surprise winner is THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY and there is a short interview with the director, John Mackenzie about the making of the film.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.6 no.8. August 1996, pp.20-21

Haunting Friday, by Barrie Keeffe

The screenwriter for THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY recalls the influences that led to the making of the film and how they made their way into the narrative of the film. Interesting for Keeffe's reminiscences about real life East End gangsters.

CINEMA PAPERS

no.33. July/August 1981, pp.287-288

The long Good Friday, by Stephen Garton

In his review of the film, Garton sees THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY as more of an action film than a gangster film.

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

vol.48 no.566. March 1981, p.51

The long Good Friday, by Richard Combs

In his largely negative review of the film, Combs sees it as borrowing too heavily from the US gangster genre, so that the film becomes a “caricature”.

Press Articles

THE GUARDIAN

28th April 2000, pp.10 and 12

Geezers with guns, by Sam Delaney

Describing both GET CARTER and THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY as “bleak affairs that dealt with big, black themes of betrayal and paranoia” Delaney acknowledges that while LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS was a good film that provided the British film industry with a much needed respite from costume dramas, it has also led to a whole load of British “gangster flicks by numbers”. This useful article includes many references to both GET CARTER and THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

22nd April 2000, p.7

Leader of the gangsters, by Clark Collis

An account of how real-life gangsters and criminals provided inspiration before and during the making of THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY, and how the film nearly didn't get a theatrical release on completion.

THE OBSERVER

20th February 2000, pp.6-7

Hanging around in the hood..., by Akin Ojumu

Made-up from series of interviews with Bob Hoskins and the filmmakers of THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY, their recollections provide an interesting account of the making of the film.

DAILY STAR

18th November 1980

Cut! The scenes they don't want you to see on TV, by Brian Wesley

A contemporary report on how Bob Hoskins and Helen Mirren attempted to buy back the rights to the film from Lord Grade (owner of the production company) after he threatened to have the film heavily re-cut and shown only on television, for fear of terrorist reprisals.

THE TIMES

21st November 1980

Cinematic vigour to be wasted on television, by David Robinson

A contemporary review of THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY that praises the film, but criticises the production company Black Lion Films for not only deciding to heavily edit the film and consigning it to television in Britain, but also for deciding to have Bob Hoskins voice re-dubbed for the American release.

THE SCOTSMAN

26th August 1980

British back in business, by Julie Davidson

This review praises the film and notes its stylistic roots in television drama.

New British Gangster Films

After THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY the re-emergence of the British crime film came with a bang with Guy Ritchie's LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS. The success of this film both culturally and commercially revitalised the gangster/crime genre in the UK and led to films such as RANCID ALUMINIUM, LOVE, HONOUR AND OBEY, CIRCUS and many more. Unfortunately most of these films have been critically dismissed. Apart from LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS the other films in this case study were well received by the critics, but highlight the problems the new British gangster films have faced.

Lock, stock and two smoking barrels (1998)

Dir. Guy Ritchie

Books

RITCHIE, Guy

Lock, stock and two smoking barrels.

Headline, 1998. 180p. illus.

This well illustrated screenplay includes an introduction by Guy Ritchie on the making of the film.

Journal Articles

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.8 no.9. September 1998, pp.46-47

Lock, stock and two smoking barrels, by Danny Leigh

While Leigh has some praise for the film, this review finds LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS, essentially "High on spectacle, low on identity". References are made to Quentin Tarantino and the "...studiedly laddish content".

SCREEN INTERNATIONAL

no.1202. 2nd April 1999, p.8

A note on how LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS became the fifth most rented video in the UK in 1999.

CREATIVE SCREENWRITING

vol.6 no.2 March/April 1999, pp.5-6

An interview with Britain's Tarantino: Guy Ritchie, by Tony Ross

Ross sees Guy Ritchie as part of a new wave of British filmmakers; breaking away from the genres traditionally associated with British films and at the same time making the best crime film since THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY. Comparisons are also made with Quentin Tarantino, as their films are stylistically similar. Tony Ross is enthusiastic about LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS, describing it as a "...violent gem of a film".

INTERVIEW

March 1999, pp.68-70

Guy about town, by David Furnish

This is an interview with the director of *LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS*, Guy Ritchie about the film and his career to date.

INTERVIEW

February 1999, p.81

Testosterone in trouble, by Graham Fuller

Fuller's short article focuses on the masculinity of the film; no major female characters, the violence, the casting, and how the film is heavily indebted to *RESERVOIR DOGS*. Fuller seems to be implying that all the displays of machismo may mean the men have something to worry about.

Press Articles

THE OBSERVER

3rd September 2000, p.7

One in three young criminals is armed, by Tony Thompson

A report on the police and governments growing concern over Britain's "gun culture", which has seen, claims the report, one in three criminals under the age of 25 either own a gun or have access to a firearm. Police believe one of the reasons for this, is the "gangster chic" made popular by films such as *LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS*.

THE GUARDIAN

5th September 1998, p.3

Bang to rights, by Bruce Reynolds

Former Great Train Robber, Bruce Reynolds review starts by noting that while it is not the best British gangster film he has seen it is the "most audacious debut". In a review that is mainly positive, he describes the film as being "derivative and innovative at the same time".

THE GUARDIAN

28th August 1998, p.8

Guns on the run, by Gaby Wood

In her review, Wood notes that while stylistically following on from Tarantino, Guy Ritchie has translated the formula in an "already established British genre" and that it is a natural follow-on in a long line of British gangster films, such as *PERFORMANCE*, *GET CARTER* and *THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY*.

FINANCIAL TIMES

27th August 1998, p.10

The funny side of London gangland, by Nigel Andrews

While praising the brilliance of the film, Andrews notes that “we keep wanting the film to be more than a joke”, and that in comparison Martin Scorsese’s GOODFELLAS manages to be “not just funny but horrifying”.

SUNDAY TIMES

23rd August 1998, p.6

Shooting from the hip, Anna Pasternak

This article looks at the popularity of LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS in Hollywood and with “fashion designers, movie stars, and pop idols”.

THE INDEPENDENT

27th August 1998, p.13

Welcome to the...,by Ryan Gilbey

While Gilbey praises the film as “a credible attempt at rescuing a home-grown product from American influence”, he criticises the film for being “divorced from reality” and the direction as “showy”. Gilbey also notes the lack of women in the film.

EVENING STANDARD

18th August 1998, p.51

Audiences love the dark side of life, by Nico Rilla

A letter criticising Simon Jenkins article *These villains look good on the screen – but not on our streets* (see below). Rilla notes that while filmmakers have a social responsibility, at the end of the day the films should be judged on merit.

EVENING STANDARD

14th August 1998, p.11

These villains look good on the screen – but not on our streets, by Simon Jenkins

An article by Simon Jenkins attacking LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS for being part of a wave in British culture that has seen the gangster glamorised.

TIME OUT

12th August 1998, pp.14-16

Year of the gun, by Tom Charity

This article contains interviews with Guy Ritchie and Vinnie Jones, and also looks at the films place within the British gangster film tradition. Ritchie’s comments are particularly interesting.

Gangster No.1 (2000) Dir. Paul McGuigan

Journal Articles

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.10 no.8. August 2000, p.6

Film news: redundant reviews

This brief article questions why GANGSTER NO.1 did so badly at the box office despite good reviews, while the similar LOVE, HONOUR AND OBEY took two million pounds despite it being “reviled”. Amongst the reasons given for this anomaly, was that firstly, not enough was spent on the marketing, the timing of its release was wrong (Euro 2000 had started) and that it was caught in a backlash against the current British gangster films.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.10 no.7. July 2000, pp.45-46

Gangster no.1, by Mark Kermode

Kermode’s review of the film describes it as “a handsomely ugly affair” and picks up on the juxtapositions within the film and the crime underworld it depicts.

Press Articles

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

13th August 2000, p.1

Crime on film, and off, doesn’t pay, by Jason Nisse

A convoluted but interesting article that looks at the disappointing box office takings of GANGSTER NO.1 and of the involvement of Richard Thompson, whose company, Civilian Content had bought the films production company, Pagoda.

NEW STATESMAN

12th June 2000, pp.45-46

Dying cult, by Jonathan Romney

This article has Romney noting the Oedipal/father figure obsessed qualities of recent British gangster films, before going on to review GANGSTER NO.1. While applauding the film for being better than a lot of recent British gangster films, in that it does not go for cheap laughs, it is still to some extent style-obsessed, and while “several cuts above the rest...it’s still not much more than a dazzling parade of dead bad dads”.

THE GUARDIAN

9th June 2000, p.4

Street fighting man, by Peter Bradshaw

Describing how the “talentless lottery gangster film has pretty well become a contemporary cultural crisis” Bradshaw applauds GANGSTER NO.1 for being “a film with a canny yet

appalled sense of the repulsive realities of crime and the unlovely, unfunny people involved in it". This review provides an articulate critique of the film.

THE TIMES

6th June 2000, p.22

If you think you're hard enough, by Carol Allen

This article looks at the making of the film and ideas behind the characters and contains quotes from Paul Webster, Chief Executive at Film Four, and Norma Heyman, the producer. An informative article, that also highlights the near ubiquity of British gangster films in recent years and asks if the trend has run its course.

TIME OUT

7th June 2000, p.18-19

The hit parade, by Brian Case

While talking about GANGSTER NO.1, this interview with one of the actors, Jamie Foreman, and his father (and one time criminal) Freddie Foreman, covers all areas of real-life crime and gangster film in general. Their recollections are entertainingly amusing (if at times slightly unnerving).

THE TIMES

8th June 2000, p.16

Nasty pieces of work, some of them, by James Christopher

This review praises the film for standing "head and shoulders above the current crop of British gangster movies".

Sexy Beast (2000) Dir. Jonathan Glazer

Journal Articles

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.11 no.2. February 2001, pp.48-49

Sexy beast, by Xan Brooks

In his review of the film, Brooks describes SEXY BEAST as a "film about the end of things"; that while many of the recent British gangster films have been testosterone "lads with guns" adventures, SEXY BEAST shows what happens when gangsters grow old. This is a review that will provide some useful ideas for those looking at the re-emergence of the British gangster film in the past decade.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.11 no.1. January 2001, pp.18-20

Thieves on the verge of a nervous breakdown, by Nick James

Primarily an interview with the director of SEXY BEAST, Jonathan Glazer, Nick James notes that while Glazer has the same commercials/music video background of other contemporary British directors (notably Guy Ritchie), SEXY BEAST is a much better film than most of the recent British gangster movies. The interview with Glazer focuses on the making of the film and in particular Ben Kingsley's characterisation of Don Logan.

Press Articles

NEW STATESMAN

15th January 2001, p.46-47

Muy guapo, by Jonathan Romney

While finding some faults with the film, Romney's article praises it for being "a classy and always surprising late entry in the Brit-crime cycle". Romney ends his article by hoping that SEXY BEAST will be the "last-word on the geezer gangster flick".

FINANCIAL TIMES

11th January 2001, p.20

The British gangster movie that isn't, by Nigel Andrews

This is a positive review of the film that praises SEXY BEAST for being better than a lot of recent British gangster films.

“Nothing is more important than loyalty.”

(Koji Tsuruta in *Gambling House: Presidential Gambling*, 1968)

The Japanese gangster (or *yakuza*) movie took over from sword-fighting period films (*chambara*) in the mid-1960s to become Japan’s most popular genre, with over 500 examples produced in the 1960s and 1970s alone. A dramatised conflict between the Japanese concepts of *giri* (duty, honour and loyalty to the group) and *ninjo* (humanity, individual feelings), most *yakuza* films have a highly codified structure and, as such, provide a rich comparison with both American gangster films and Westerns in terms of genre studies. While *yakuza* films have a strong affinity with Japanese feudalism, they share with American gangster movies generic structures such as: the gang as surrogate family; rites of initiation, belonging and punishment (e.g. the severing of the little finger as an act of contrition); iconographic signifiers (with samurai swords and body tattoos replacing guns and fedoras); the fetishisation of violence; and the romanticising of outlaw life.

In his 1974 essay, ‘The Yakuza Eiga’ (the *yakuza*-equivalent of Robert Warshow’s seminal ‘The Gangster as Tragic Hero’), Paul Schrader defines three phases of the *yakuza* film: low budget ‘B’ movies from 1964-7; a ‘classical’ period of “open morality tales” with bigger budgets and stars, usually set in the early 1900s; and documentary-style contemporary dramas featuring nihilistic anti-heroes. Although the *yakuza* genre was regarded as extinct by the mid-1970s, a fourth phase (which might best be described as the “postmodern” *yakuza* film) began in the early 1990s as the genre was revitalised by directors such as Takeshi Kitano. Kitano’s films (among them VIOLENT COP, BOILING POINT, SONATINE, HANA-BI and BROTHER) are part critique of, part paean to, the genre, and in their ironic and self-referential play of generic codes they are close cousins to American gangster films such as Tarantino’s RESERVOIR DOGS or Scorsese’s GOODFELLAS. Kitano’s cult status has led to a resurgence of interest in the genre, and many younger directors such as Takashi Miike (SHINJUKU TRIAD SOCIETY, RAINY DOG, DEAD OR ALIVE) and Takashi Ishii (GONIN I and II) are producing contemporary *yakuza* films of considerable merit.

The main obstacle to academic study of the *yakuza* movie has been the difficulty of viewing the films themselves, with even acknowledged classics of the genre such as the ABASHIRI PRISON series (1964-), starring Ken Takakura, Kosaku Yamashita’s GAMBLING HOUSE: PRESIDENTIAL GAMBLING (1968) or Kinji Fukasaku’s brutalist masterpiece BATTLES WITHOUT HONOUR AND HUMANITY series (JINGI NAKI TATAKAI, 1973-4), starring Bunta Sugawara, still unavailable in this country. However, thanks to the interest generated by Kitano’s international success (HANA-BI won the Golden Bear at Venice in 1987) the *yakuza* film is once more becoming an object of critical attention.

Books

BARRETT, Gregory

Archetypes in Japanese film: the socio-political and religious significance of the principal heroes and heroines.

Susquehanna Univ. Press; Associated University Presses, 1989. 252p. illus. bibliog. index.

For Barrett, “the modern *yakuza* hero performs a social function that is at the core of any society, primitive or modern: individual sacrifice for social preservation” (p76). Barrett sees principal figures such as the “Tormented Father Figure”, the “Young Hero” and the “Middle-Aged Hero” as modern reworkings of traditional Japanese archetypes from mythology and folklore, whose social function is to provide a model of submission and encourage strong group affiliation.

BURUMA, Ian

Behind the mask: on sexual demons, sacred mothers, transvestites, gangsters, and other Japanese cultural heroes.

Meridian, 1984. 242p. illus. index.

Brilliant cultural analysis of Japanese society through its myths, movies and pop culture. Buruma offers a convincing reading of the movie (as opposed to real) *yakuza* as anachronistic heroes “fighting a rearguard action against the corrupt modern age” (p170). For Buruma, “*yakuza* films are rituals in a tightly knit world based on a mythical and idealised past. The ritual is also intimately connected with death” (p171). The American gangster, an “exaggerated version of the capitalist go-getter” is closer to the bad boss of the *yakuza* movie, while its heroes are anti-progressives, much closer to the lone hero of American westerns. Like the Western hero, the *yakuza* hero acts alone (and violently) to restore social order, but he does this only by first severing group allegiance (his gang). The price of abandoning the group, of “being a super-individualist in a society that suppresses individualism” (p191), is death, unlike the Western hero who can ride off into the sunset after his act of violence.

FIELD, Simon and RAYNS, Tony (ed.)

Branded to thrill: the delirious cinema of Suzuki Seijun.

Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1994. 48p. illus. biog. filmog.

Long a cult director in Japan and inspiration for many of the younger Japanese directors working today, Suzuki has only come to the attention of the west since the 1990s, primarily through his “fractured pop art *yakuza* thrillers of the 60s” like TOKYO DRIFTER and BRANDED TO KILL. This slim volume, designed to accompany a retrospective, features notes on the key Suzuki films, and informative essays from, among others, Ian Buruma, who notes that “Suzuki’s gangster films do not conform to the rules of his genre...Violence in his *yakuza* movies is usually an absurd spectacle, meaningless, sometimes hilarious, always theatrical” (p21).

JACOBS, Brian (ed.)

‘Beat’ Takeshi Kitano

Tadao Press: 1999. 127p. col. illus.

More a celebrity profile than a critical study, this is still the only English-language book devoted to the director most responsible for reinvigorating the *yakuza* genre in the 1990s. Useful for background info and some reviews of the films, but that’s about it.

MELLEN, Joan

The waves at Genji’s door: Japan through its cinema.

Pantheon, 1976. 463p. illus. index.

Mellen’s book is an excellent study of Japanese cinema and society. She argues that *yakuza* films “propose a return to values of the past, particularly to those of the samurai culture that sustains itself by absolutes.” In response to the moral vacuum of contemporary ‘Westernised’ Japan, the *yakuza* hero seeks solace in the ancient samurai code of loyalty and sacrifice. His heroic struggle against all the odds is meant to be inspirational for the audience but inevitably leads to defeat and death. While Mellen views most *yakuza* films as highly reactionary, she also cites examples by the Japanese New Wave (Masahiro Shinoda’s PALE FLOWER, Kon Ichikawa’s THE WANDERERS) of *yakuza* films that parody these feudal values.

MOREAN, Brian

Language and popular culture in Japan.

Manchester University Press, 1989. 196p. diags. bibliog. index.

Essentially a useful summary of critical opinion. Following Mellen (see above), Morean argues, “the values of yakuza gangsters are essentially a reassertion of patriarchal supremacy in a society which has gradually become more ‘feminine’ in its ways, with Westernisation and peace” (p168). Referring to the *Hagakure*, the famous C18 book on the code of the samurai warrior (the assassin’s bible in Jim Jarmusch’s *GHOST DOG: WAY OF THE SAMURAI* – itself a pastiche of yakuza movies like Seijun Suzuki’s *BRANDED TO KILL*), which states, “what is moral must be beautiful”, Morean draws parallels between the yakuza movie and Japanese ritual practice. Often, the inevitable death of the *yakuza* hero “functions as a kind of purification”, much like Spanish bullfights (see Buruma’s book, above, for further discussion of this death ritual).

POWERS, Richard Gid and KATO, Hidetoshi (eds)

Handbook of Japanese popular culture.

Greenwood Press, 1989. 350p. bibliogs. index.

This chapter gives a brief but useful historical overview of Japanese popular cinema, including the *yakuza* genre. Writing on the classical period of the 1960s, McDonald notes, “while all *yakuza* gangster-gamblers are low-life characters, the ‘good’ *yakuza* lives true to the old-fashioned code of honour that the ‘bad’ is willing to violate” (p117). While the post war samurai movie showed heroes acting to support ‘the system’, the *yakuza* genre “has returned us to the pre-war loner hero whose moral authority” stands in opposition to a corrupt social system.

SATO, Tadao

Currents in Japanese cinema: essays.

Kodansha International, 1982. 288p. plates. chronology. Index.

In the Chapter: ‘Developments in Period Drama Films’ Sato, one of Japan’s leading film scholars, discusses the early wave of *yakuza* thrillers, usually set in the early 1900s and less nihilistic than the modern *yakuza* films produced in the 1970s. He suggests that *yakuza* films became popular in the 1960s by offering a “utopia for lonely young men” recently arrived in Japan’s big cities who “cherish the wish of belonging to a small tight group bound by friendship and loyalty” (p53). The attack by a lone hero on a large profit-oriented enterprise (the ‘bad’ gang) also provided a social outlet for a critique of capitalism and its dehumanising aspects: “such a hero was only a myth, but he was loved by the Japanese, who were mostly poor and preferred to believe that they were honest while the rich were liars” (p242).

SCHILLING, Mark

Contemporary Japanese film.

Weatherhill, 1999. 399p. index.

This collection comprises Schilling’s reviews for The Japan Times during the 1990s, including many contemporary *yakuza* movies, and all films are usefully indexed by subject and director. The book also features interviews with leading figures in the Japanese film world (including Takeshi Kitano) and several useful essays on the state of contemporary Japanese cinema.

SERVER, Lee

Asian pop cinema: Bombay to Tokyo.

Chronicle Books, 1999 132p. illus. bibliog.

Lightweight survey, but includes short chapters on key 'yakuza film' directors, Seijun Suzuki and Takeshi Kitano.

SUZUKI, Seijun

Woestijn onder de kersebloesem = The Desert under the Cherry Blossoms

Film Festival Rotterdam/Uitgeverij Uniepers Abcoude, 1991. 88p. illus. bibliog. filmog.

Another volume designed to accompany a Suzuki retrospective; this Dutch collection features lots of writings from the director himself (p39-40 on *yakuza* films) and a detailed essay on his work.

WEISSER, Thomas and WEISSER, Yuko Mihara

Japanese cinema: essential handbook (rev. 4th ed).

Vital Books Inc./Asian Cult Cinema Publications, 1998. 397p. [32] col. plates.

Not much critique but invaluable as a reference source if you plan to track down those hard-to-find *yakuza* cult classics.

Journal Articles

CINEMA JOURNAL

vol.40 no.4. Summer 2001, pp.55-80

Reigniting Japanese tradition with *Hana-Bi*, by Darrell William Davies

Davies analyses Kitano's *HANA-BI* (*FIREWORKS*, 1997) for its appropriation of traditional Japanese iconography (the use of images like cherry blossoms and raked sand gardens which stand for Japanese tradition in the same metonymic way that palms trees represent Los Angeles), and examines how Kitano reworks the conventions of the *yakuza* genre in his films: "mob hierarchy is balanced by an eccentric individual; *yakuza* trappings such as tattoos, sunglasses and silk shirts, are ridiculed; and swaggering toughs are humiliated by quiet, lethal loners" (p69). Another staple of the *yakuza* film is the boss-apprentice (*oyabun-kobun*) relationship, which, in Kitano's films, is recast as a "homoerotic or sadomasochistic 'training session' [in which] a crazy veteran both teaches and exploits youngsters" (p70).

ASIAN CULT CINEMA

issue 30, 2001, pp.49-52

A triple dose of Takashi Miike, by Steven Puchalski

Miike is an iconoclastic genre-bending *shockmeister* in the spirit of Suzuki and his work deserves more serious critical attention. Don't expect to find much in **Asian Cult Cinema**, but it will definitely whet your appetite.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.10 no.5. May 2000, pp.30-32

This gun for hire, by Tony Rayns

Good introductory critique of Takashi Miike, with Rayns listing the director's defining characteristics as: a nonconformist approach to film grammar and narrative structure, the interest in a broad spectrum of human sexuality and sexual motivation, a belief that Japanese virtues of modesty and restraint need to be balanced by liberating excesses, and a wicked, absurdist sense of humour. Rayns also notes that Miike is interested in the "cross-cultural fertilisation" (p30) of Japan by other Asian cultures (such as in his *loose* yakuza trilogy, SHINJUKU TRIAD SOCIETY, RAINY DOG and LEY LINES, which centre on "the differences between Japanese and Chinese gangsters", p31) and compares his apocalyptic *yakuza* drama DEAD OR ALIVE to Suzuki's BRANDED TO KILL and TOKYO DRIFTER.

ASIAN CULT CINEMA

issue 18, January 1998, pp.60-62

Sunflowers on the beach: an essay on Sonatine, by Chris Vaillancourt

Brief introduction to Kitano's most perfect reconfiguration of the lone *yakuza* hero, which the author calls "as revolutionary as Suzuki's Branded to Kill or Fukasaku's Death of Honour" (p62).

ASIAN CULT CINEMA

issue 21, 1998, pp.36-59

Seijun Suzuki: a rebel without a cause, by Brian Puterman

Lengthy interview with Suzuki (although the director provides little insight into his films), and detailed filmography with synopses.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.7 no.12. December 1997, pp.26-29

Flowers and fire, by Tony Rayns

Report from the set of Takeshi Kitano's HANA-BI and an interview with the director.

SIGHT AND SOUND

November 1997 LFF supp., pp.8-9

Gangsters from the East, by Tony Rayns

An examination of the gangster genre as used in the Thai DANG BIRELEY'S AND THE YOUNG GANGSTERS (1997), the Korean GREEN FISH (1997) and in the Japanese HANA-BI, all shown in the 1997 London Film Festival. Rayns argues that HANA-BI, like the director's earlier SONATINE, is "an extended meditation on what makes death worth living for" and notes that while "other directors working with gangster characters and iconography never quite get past the social dimensions of the stories they tell...for Kitano, the gangster is the last existential" (p9).

ASIAN CULT CINEMA

issue 17. September 1997, pp.42-45

Kinji Fukasaku, by Patrick Macias'

Interview with Fukasaku, primarily about his *yakuza* movies.

FILM CRITICISM

vol.8 no.1. Autumn 1983, pp.20-32

Kinji Fukasaku: an introduction, by Keiko McDonald

A study of the great *yakuza* film director. While acknowledging that Fukasaku's films of the 1960s-70s were "Grade B films and financial failures" McDonald argues that many "reveal a surprising amount of serious social comment on the state of post war Japan" (p23), particularly his five-part JINGI NAKI TATAKAI series (1973-4) which "brought about a radical change in the history of the *yakuza* gangster film" (p24). Fukasaku dispensed with the simple good vs. evil morality and concentrated instead on (in Fukasaku's words) "the negative aspects of *yakuza* life...Then, too, I became interested in violence itself, its contagious, chaotic, purposeless character."

FILM COMMENT

vol.10 no.1. Jan/Feb 1974, pp.10-17

Yakuza-Eiga: a primer, by Paul Schrader

Schrader's survey of the 'Japanese gangster film' (*yakuza eiga*) provided the first systematic English-language analysis of the genre. Schrader gives a history of the genre and outlines its central theme of group loyalty vs. individual humanity (*giri-ninjo*): "stripped of the moral security of the samurai...the protagonist is a man (or woman) of high moral principles trapped in a web of circumstances which compromise them. He attempts to pursue both duty and humanity but finds them drawing increasingly apart. In the end he must choose...a decision that can only be made in a bath of blood" (p12). While considering Tadao Sato's concern that *yakuza* films have "created a new situational morality where duty can be more important than humanity – thus opening new doors to old forms of fascism" Schrader feels that for Americans "accustomed to the open fascism of films like *The Godfather* and *Dirty Harry*, *yakuza* movies seem clearly humanitarian" (p12). Schrader's article also takes in genre conventions, stylistics and personalities. Like other key studies of popular genres in the early 1970s, Schrader argues that the *yakuza* films are worthy of study "not [as] individual works of art" but, rather, as "a popular social contract between artists and audiences to re-evaluate and re-structure traditional values" at a time of rapid Westernisation.

The Sopranos

compiled by Stephen Gordon

Books

CHASE, David

The Sopranos scriptbook.

Channel 4 Books, 2001. 254p. [8] plates.

A selection of scripts taken from three series that includes the pilot episode and scenes that never made it to transition. It also includes the Emmy Award winning episode "College" from series one. There is an introduction by writer, creator and director David Chase although it covers a lot of ground previously covered in journal interviews. For fans, there are some good color images of the production process with some familiar and not so familiar scene, including an omitted shot of Tony kissing Dr Melphi.

What strikes you about these scripts are how wonderfully written they are, the flowing dialogue and the speed and intensity in which enemies are made (e.g., in "Proshai, Livushka" p.217, where Tony meets Meadow's new black 'friend') and how suddenly someone can be killed, (e.g., "The Knight in White Satin Armor" p.203-4, where Janice kills her mobster lover Richie Aprile). The scripts manage to translate some of the style and quality that is the essence of the series.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

The New York Times on The Sopranos.

Ibooks, New York, 2001. ix-xix, 216p. illus.

Updated and expanded for the third series, The New York Times on THE SOPRANOS traces the history of the show, provides a guide to the major cast and characters and takes you behind the scenes to learn about the author of the series, David Chase. The style and content of the book are straightforward. It dedicates a chapter to each character with a brief biog on the actors who play them, but the information here is mainly second hand and could be found in some of the more thorough sources listed below.

Journal Articles

METRO

no.133. 2002, pp. 98-107

Everything's relative or The Sopranos as a sign of the (New York) times, by Steven Aoun

This account of relationships and conflicts between families, values, lifestyles and the choices people have to make in THE SOPRANOS is the main focus of this article. Aoun places many of his ideas in a postmodernist framework. This article looks at the main ideas and themes of the show and analyses them in an interesting and concise manner.

SIGHT AND SOUND

vol.11 no.4. April 2001, p.66

Gangster number one, by Rob White

Written to accompany the release of the first series on DVD this article looks at some of the key episodes in series 1 and offers some insightful arguments for THE SOPRANOS' phenomenal success.

EMMY

vol.23 no.23. March/April 2001, pp. 60-63

Music and the mob, by Kathleen O'Steen

Alabama Three's pulsating soundtrack "Woke Up This Morning" has become synonymous with THE SOPRANOS. This article looks at the use of music in the series, which has been widely acclaimed in much the same way as the series itself. Unlike many drama series', the music used on THE SOPRANOS is not composed specifically for the show. Instead, creator David Chase, producer Martin Bruestle and music editor for the series Kathryn Dayak choose a selection of pre-recorded material to underscore the scenes. Chase, Bruestle and Dayak discuss the process of choosing what tracks to use and why they have steered clear of an original music score.

CREATIVE SCREENWRITING

vol.8 no.1. January/February 2001, pp.37-39

Soprano success, by Patricia Burkhart-Smith

An interview with SOPRANOS' creator and writer David Chase discussing his early writing background on U.S. television shows like THE ROCKFORD FILES, FLY AWAY and NORTHERN EXPOSURE. Although much of his work has been in television, Chase acknowledges his love for the movies and his desire to write and direct for the big screen. Burkhart Smith suggests this ambition has translated itself into what is now the Sopranos style; the concept of utilising cinematic techniques and aesthetics for production on the small screen.

Chase selects some early TV/film influences that inspired the creation of THE SOPRANOS, including the popular U.S. series THE UNTOUCHABLES and William Wellman's THE PUBLIC ENEMY. Chase claims that what lies at the heart of THE SOPRANOS popularity, especially with Americans, is what he describes as the "perversion of capitalism". Chase continues, "Seeing the scams; the ingeniousness, the brazenness, the sickness of it, is so appealing".

Chase believes his relationship with HBO has been an important factor in the show's growing success, giving him the creative freedom needed to bring THE SOPRANOS to life on the small screen.

FADE IN

vol.6 no.3. 2001, pp.40-53

Made man: hit after hit, David Chase ushers The Sopranos into the big time, by Audrey Kelly

Extensive question and answer interview with SOPRANOS creator David Chase who talks candidly about his work, influences and the success of THE SOPRANOS. Some good issues are raised, such as, the criticism being leveled at the show for its "stereotypical portrayal of Italian-Americans" and that it glorifies the gangster lifestyle, all of which Chase refutes. Chase

defends his work and also questions the logic of his critics. He goes on to discuss the gangster mentality/lifestyle and then in another bid to counter his critics asks; “ Does TONY SOPRANO seem like a happy man?” Recommended reading.

WRITTEN BY

vol.4 no.8. September 2000, pp.32-39

For he’s a jolly Goodfella: From Scarface to the Sopranos, by Pat Sierchio

An extensive and informative article charting the rise, fall and rise again of the Hollywood gangster genre and exploring the relationship between Mafia fact and Hollywood fiction. It looks at the earliest gangster film, the silent classic UNDERWORLD, through LITTLE CAESAR, SCARFACE and DILLINGER to BONNIE AND CLYDE, THE GODFATHER, GOODFELLAS and CASINO to trace how the gangster drama emerged from the symbolic link between culture and criminality.

THE SOPRANOS is an example of how a drama with a good script can still bring something fresh and original to the gangster genre. It does so claims SOPRANOS’ executive producer Frank Renzulli, by returning to its origin and making the characters, “real people first and what they do for a living second”.

IN CAMERA

July 2000. p.15

Mob hit: shooting The Sopranos

One page article looking at the work of THE SOPRANOS’ director of photography Phil Abrahams. Abrahams explains the techniques and equipment used on the show, such as, the film stock, the locations and the lighting as well as his own views on why the shows’ unique qualities have made it such an overwhelming success.

EYEPIECE

vol.21 no.3. June/August 2000, pp.32-33

Sopranos’ DoP makes a hit, by Madelyn Most

Interview with SOPRANOS’ director of photography Phil Abrahams. Abrahams took over as DoP from Alik Sakharov during the first series and in this article he discusses in detail the type of camera equipment, film stock, shooting methods and locations used on the show and how the overall look and feel of THE SOPRANOS is achieved. One aspect of THE SOPRANOS’ photography that has become particularly prevalent is the use of one shot per scene. This is a concept Abrahams appears interested to explore further. He claims, “ I am always trying to use camera movement to tell the story in a way that might save us some set-ups”. Another major aspect Abrahams contributes to the success of THE SOPRANOS is the running time. It is a one-hour show (unlike the network channels which usually last around 42mins.) and this, claims Abrahams, is very liberating for an editor “[We] can let a scene breathe ... cut the show to the show”.

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY
no. 526. 18th February 2000, p.25

Evil genius, by Mike Flaherty

This article looks at the introduction in the second series of old-school goodfella RICHIE APRILE. There is an interview with the actor David Proval, (RICHIE) who breaks down the mentality of the character, and where the inspiration for RICHIE came from.

VANITY FAIR
no.474. February 2000, pp.24-27

HBO's singular sensation, by James Wolcott

Well-written and informative article that principally looks at the success of the cable network Home Box Office and the roster of award winning shows the channel houses. There is a breakdown of the shows that appear on the channel which includes SEX AND THE CITY, THE LARRY SANDERS SHOW and the excellent prison drama OZ, as well as how the idea for the Sopranos fitted in with the channel's remit for challenging, risk-taking drama.

Wolcott looks briefly at the role of the female characters in THE SOPRANOS, like the almost Romanesque cunning of TONY's mother LIVIA and the compliant yet contradictory role of the Mafia wife, CARMELA.

The article makes an interesting comparison between THE SOPRANOS and an earlier made-for-TV gangster series on CBS entitled WISEGUYS. Created by Stephen J Cannell (A-TEAM), the series was credited with breaking away from the standard format of self-contained episodes and pioneered the development of the extended story arc, a method THE SOPRANOS has used to even greater effect.

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY
no.520. 7th January 2000, pp.20-27

Bright lights, baked Ziti, by Steve Daly

An interesting article especially for fans of the series conducted in between the first and second series. There are interviews with the leading cast members; James Gandolfini (TONY SOPRANO), Edie Falco (CARMELA SOPRANO), Aida Turturro (JANICE SOPRANO), Steven Van Zandt (SILVIO DANTE), Tony Sirico (PAULIE WALNUTS) and the late Nancy Marchand who plays Tony's calculating 'mother with no love' LIVIA.

Gandolfini, Van Zandt and Sirico recall, amusingly, their different audition experiences which includes Van Zandt originally going up for the part as TONY. Writer and creator David Chase discusses his early work and the origins of THE SOPRANOS. The article also looks at the on-going saga of the National Italian-American Federation, who objects to the shows portrayal of Italian-Americans claiming they are defamatory and stereotypical.

WRITTEN BY
September 1999, pp.24-25

Chasing Emmy, by David Chase

David Chase, creator and writer of THE SOPRANOS, writes in his own words about the origins of the series. From its early beginnings as an idea for a feature film through to the struggles it

had with the major network executives. Chase highlights their contrasting attitudes when the pilot script was pitched. Chase claims that HBO were the only ones concerned with, “making it smarter or just keeping it consistent”.

Chase explains how the writers develop the stories together by creating a three-way story plan, which, through reasoning or simply logistics is tailored into one storyline. He also touches on the role of therapy as it's practiced today by claiming it's the “ultimate place of non-accountability”. This reference to non-accountability is evident in the scenes between TONY (James Gandolfini) and his therapist DR JENNIFER MELFI (Lorraine Bracco). Here, issues of Tony's childhood, his mother, father, the idea that he had ‘no choice in leading this life’, leaves Tony in a very contradictory space for personal accountability.

EMMY

vol.21 no.4. August 1999, pp72-78

Giving Chase, by Burt Prelutsk

This article focuses mainly on the work of writer/director David Chase that takes a more detailed look at his previous work on shows like THE ROCKFORD FILES and NORTHERN EXPOSURE. There are quotes from previous collaborators as well as an interview with Chase. There is a discussion on the role of women in Tony's life. Chase claims he wanted to move away from the stereotypical mobster wife/girlfriend and try to view the life of an organized crime family through the eyes of the women. The importance of this is evident throughout the series as it is the women; LIVIA (mother), CARMELA (wife) MEADOW (daughter) and DR MELPHI (therapist) who manage to edge TONY into reflection. It is Tony's need to reflect that makes him vulnerable.

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

no.489. 11th June 1999. pp.24-31

Family reunion, by Mike Flaherty and Mary Kaye Schilling

A guide to the first series of THE SOPRANOS that offers a brief introduction for the uninitiated and puts together an A-Z glossary of all things Soprano. Also included is an individual character breakdown from Tony's immediate family through to his extended ‘family’ relatives. However, some of the characters featured no longer appear in the series.

Press Articles

The following articles are kept on microfiche at the *bfi* National Library under **The Sopranos**.

THE INDEPENDENT

7th April 2001

Italians sue, by David Usborne

This article focuses on the growing unrest amongst certain sections of the Italian-American community about what they feel is the stereotypical and derogatory portrayal of Italian-Americans in THE SOPRANOS

THE INDEPENDENT

29th October 2000

Mob rule make for art of the very highest order, by Will Self

This article looks at how the complex strands of culture, psychology, drama and comedy are woven to produce a drams series of high quality.

THE GUARDIAN (The Guide)

13th October 2000, pp.4-7

Thug life, by Jeffrey Wernick

Crime reporter Jeffrey Wernick explains why Mafia stories make for such excellent drama and why such a small percentage of the “35 million hard working people” that call themselves Italian-American have managed to mark an entire generation.

THE INDEPENDENT

8th October 2000

And even wiser girls, by David Thomson

Article examines the role of the female characters in THE SOPRANOS and how their position has changed to that of predecessors like THE GODFATHER'S KAY CORLEONE and CONNIE CORLEONE.

THE INDEPENDENT

28th July 2000, p.9

Still married to the mob, by David Thomson

Thomson boldly claims THE SOPRANOS to be the greatest piece of popular art since THE GODFATHER whilst asking why we are so fascinated with portraits of Italian-American family life.

EVENING STANDARD

23rd July 1999, p.35

The Sopranos, by Pete Clark

Written after the first three episodes of the first series this article briefly touches on the British fascination with American gangster movies and offers a rough summation of the series and its characters so far.

THE GUARDIAN

16th July 1999, p.18

It's a family affair, by Nancy Banks-Smith

“THE SOPRANOS is a wickedly funny mixture of mindless savagery and wistful yearning” explains Banks-Smith who captures only part of THE SOPRANOS' essence here. I would argue that the violence or “savagery” as Smith puts it, is far from mindless and more a complex state of mind. However, the article does touch on the importance the “family” plays in THE SOPRANOS.

THE GUARDIAN

12th July 1999, p.17

In the family way, by Mark Lawson

Lawson discusses the shows use of cultural references such as the GOODFELLAS/ GODFATHER acknowledgements and also questions whether THE SOPRANOS works as a social commentary on end-of-the-century America.

THE OBSERVER

6th June 1999

The Sopranos, by Josephine Monroe

A well-written article that examines how THE SOPRANOS has managed to shift the Mafia movie genre from its place in American cultural heritage, into the modern cultural landscape.

EVENING STANDARD

14th May 1999, p.29

He's balding, fat and nearly 40 – meet America's latest sex god, by Barbara McMahon

Assesses the up-coming first series of THE SOPRANOS to be screened on Channel 4 and how the series and its lead character, Tony Soprano, have taken America and in particular its female audience, by storm.

THE GUARDIAN

27th April 1999, p.10+11

They're Sopranos but they ain't no choirboys, by Mike Ellison

This article outlines the new 13 part series coming to Channel 4 with a few choice quotes used in the series. Also looks at the reasons why the major networks declined to commission the series, namely, nudity, language and violence.

VILLAGE VOICE

12th January 1999, p.5

Even mobsters get the blues, by Tom Carson

An early article written before the first series began in the UK that outlines the general plot as well as making some useful acknowledgments to the influences inherent in THE SOPRANOS.

Websites

www.hbo.com/sopranos

HBO's official SOPRANOS website is well designed, informative and up-to-date. There is the usual breakdown of the cast and characters as well as an excellent synopsis of each and every episode from all three series.

www.the-sopranos.com

A similar site to the official HBO site above, with character/cast breakdowns and synopsis' from all three series (which happens to be the same as the HBO site) and links to other gangster related sites. The site also offers up-to-date news on all things SOPRANO including profiles on cast members and their recent projects outside of the series. Not much in the way of articles or essays.

www.thesopranos.tripod.com

A UK site which has only the first two series on its pages. Offers the usual assortment of trivia, family trees and merchandise. However, the text on the site is written in a terrible translucent blue/purple font and is difficult to read.

www.thesopranos.com

This is an unofficial forum website that is well designed and has some good links. Could be useful for finding out SOPRANO information, i.e. useful articles, essays or books as the messages seem to be from fairly clued up fans.

www.sopranoland.com

This is The Sopranos' fan mega site and is geared towards the hardcore fans. There are all the features you would expect from a fans website; episode breakdowns, features on the cast and merchandise giveaways. The most interesting and probably the most useful features are the '**publicity**' and the '**what's new**' sections. '**Publicity**' features articles taken from a variety of US newspapers and journals and could be useful for quotes or sources. '**What's New**' keeps all fans abreast of everything current in Soprano land.

www.sopranostv.co.uk

Another UK site that has some attractive graphics but unfortunately has not been up-dated since the end of the second series. The site has the usual episode guide, a family tree a section called '**mob-speak**' and probably most useful of all, an interview with David Chase under the section '**the real boss**'.

Articles/Essays on the Web

Ungood fellas by DE STEFANO, George @ www.past.thenation.com
February 2000

An interesting article dealing with the depiction of Italian-Americans in film and television. De Stefano draws a parallel between Italians living in Italy and Italian-Americans' attitude towards portrayals of organized crime in movies and television.

The census and The Sopranos; adventures in a post-racial America
by GILLESPIE, Nick @ www.reasons.com
May 2001

Well-written and informative article that tackles issues of race and ethnicity in THE SOPRANOS. Although the article gets heavy on the percentage figures early on and only gets to the Soprano link on page three, Gillespie uses some good references, (e.g. Paul Gilroy's 'Against Race'). The article makes reference to Tony's reaction to Meadows black boyfriend and how Tony's identity, irrevocably linked to his ethnicity, is both his source of power and his neurosis.

Coming heavy by LAVERY, David @ www.poppolitics.com

Umberto Eco once wrote of the predominance of the "already said" and nowhere is this signature of postmodernism more subtly used on TV than in THE SOPRANOS. This essay looks at the way THE SOPRANOS uses intertextuality as a way of capturing its audience and keeping the reel, real.

We Are family by MILLMAN, Joyce @ www.salon.com/ent/col/mill/2000/01/14/sopranos
January 14, 2000

This article looks at the way *'the family'* is portrayed in THE SOPRANOS and how, in a unique twist on the usual patriarchal Mafia story, the sins of the mother are visited on the son.

Morality and 'The Sopranos' by PODRAZIK, Walter @ www.monitor.com
August 7 2001

A slightly moralistic article that makes some points concerning plot manipulation but fails to acknowledge the complexity of male psychology that THE SOPRANOS attempts to present as well as the family/power hierarchy that is integral to the show's appeal.