Film Noir Guide: 745 Films of the Classic Era, 1940-1959 by Michael F. Keaney

The term film noir was first applied by French critics to a number of American films that made their way to France over a period of six weeks at the end of World War II. These films, such as The Maltese Falcon, Murder, My Sweet, This Gun for Hire and The Big Sleep, fascinated French moviegoers with their new breed of criminals - love-starved husbands and wives, local business owners, writers, gamblers, small-time hoods, private eyes, mental patients, war veterans, rebellious teenagers and corrupt lawyers, politicians, judges and cops. Over 700 film noirs from the classic period of film noir (1940-1959) are presented in this reference book - such films as The Accursed, Among the Living, The Asphalt Jungle, Baby Face Nelson, Bait, The Beat generation, Crossfire, Dark Passage, I Walk Alone, The Las Vegas Story, The Naked City, Strangers on a Train, White Heat and The Widow. For each film the following information is provided: the title of the film, release date, the main performers, the screenwriter(s), the director(s), the type of noir, the films thematic content and a rating based on the five-star system.

My Personal Review:
Mr. Keaney has done a great service to us self-proclaimed "noir heads" with his comprehensive book "The Film Noir Guide" Unlike other books of the canon, it is truly a "guide" or rather an primer to the complete noir theme. Other authors, in fact all that I've read, have analyzed film noir to death. The Keaney book minimizes this frequently trodden path and instead provides an extensive filmography of noir with a refreshing look at many obscure and borderline noirs as well as all the old favorites. Most important, it explains a simple and inexpensive way to locate and own these films. This in itself will save a significant amount of money and countless hours trying to track down these movies (Hint: They're not at Blockbuster); and it certain justifies the cost of the book. (I only wish I had a reference book like this when I started collecting). Also impressive is the
fact that he actually watched all of these movies, something other authors have neglected, often relying on third party sources. An earlier reviewer argued over several of the inclusions (BLOOD ON THE MOON, i.e.), but he clearly is not very knowledgeable about film noir (Or relies only on select authors). There are western noirs (YELLOW SKY, STATION WEST) as well as costumer noirs (BLUEBEARD, HANGOVER SQUARE), horror noirs (The Val Lewton films) and serials noirs (The SHADOW series). Noir is not just defined by THE BIG SLEEP, DOUBLE INDEMNITY and TOUCH OF EVIL. It has a look, feel and tone that cuts across genres. Frankly limiting noir to only pulp detective films is not only wrong and arbitrary but deprives the noir fanatic of many rewarding dark films. Thankfully, Mr. Keaney has bypassed this pitfall and breathed new life into an often written about subject.

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