



1939: The Making of Six Great Films from Hollywood's Greatest Year

Charles F. Adams

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Film critics and historians are virtually unanimous in considering 1939 the greatest year in the history of motion pictures. This one year produced many of the greatest films of all time, including “Gone with the Wind,” “The Wizard of Oz,” and “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington,” and marketed the height of the careers of such legendary stars as Clark Gable, Jimmy Stewart, John Wayne, and Judy Garland.

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of this amazing year in Hollywood history, “1939: The Greatest Year in Motion Picture History” profiles of six of the greatest films of the year: “Gone with the Wind,” “Stagecoach,” “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington,” “The Hound of the Baskervilles,” “The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,” and “The Wizard of Oz.” Each of these films was based on a great story, and “1939” reveals in detail how those stories came into being, how long they waited to find fame in film, and how the movies inspired by them eventually made motion picture history. “1939” also describes the behind-the-scenes story of how the film was made: how the story was adapted to a film script; the writers, producers, directors, actors, and technicians who made the film; how the film was received by critics and the public; and the later careers of the people who made the film.

“1939” plunges deep into the reality behind the Hollywood dream factory. Besides giving a full account of the artistic creation of each film, “1939” also describes the business deals that made each film possible and the Hays Office censorship that mandated careful handling of social and sexual themes — plus the colorful personalities in front and behind the camera and their sometimes disordered personal lives. Hollywood in the 1930s was crass, commercial, restrictive, and frequently dysfunctional — but it produced immensely enjoyable films that are still watched with pleasure today.

The perfect combination of film history, artistic appreciation, historical insight, and gossip, “1939: The Greatest Year in Motion Picture History” is a book that no movie fan should miss.

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