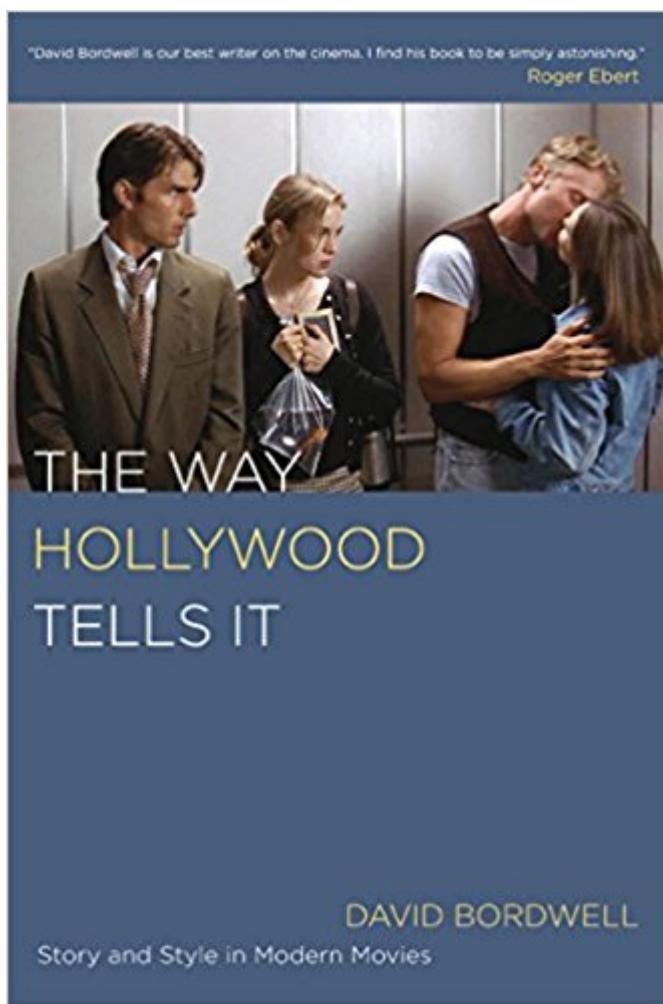


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# The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story And Style In Modern Movies



## Synopsis

Hollywood moviemaking is one of the constants of American life, but how much has it changed since the glory days of the big studios? David Bordwell argues that the principles of visual storytelling created in the studio era are alive and well, even in today's bloated blockbusters. American filmmakers have created a durable tradition—one that we should not be ashamed to call artistic, and one that survives in both mainstream entertainment and niche-marketed indie cinema. Bordwell traces the continuity of this tradition in a wide array of films made since 1960, from romantic comedies like *Jerry Maguire* and *Love Actually* to more imposing efforts like *A Beautiful Mind*. He also draws upon testimony from writers, directors, and editors who are acutely conscious of employing proven principles of plot and visual style. Within the limits of the "classical" approach, innovation can flourish. Bordwell examines how imaginative filmmakers have pushed the premises of the system in films such as *JFK*, *Memento*, and *Magnolia*. He discusses generational, technological, and economic factors leading to stability and change in Hollywood cinema and includes close analyses of selected shots and sequences. As it ranges across four decades, examining classics like *American Graffiti* and *The Godfather* as well as more recent success like *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, this book provides a vivid and engaging interpretation of how Hollywood moviemakers have created a vigorous, resourceful tradition of cinematic storytelling that continues to engage audiences around the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"David Bordwell is our best writer on the cinema. He is deeply informed about films, he loves them,

and he writes about them with a clarity and perception that makes the prose itself a joy to read. Because he sees movies so freshly and deeply he isn't deceived by the usual categories and finds excellence and experiment in unexpected places." - Roger Ebert "There is no shortage of scholarly literature on contemporary Hollywood, but none of it lives up to the standards set by Bordwell here. No one else has this range, depth, sophistication or authority. More remarkable still, Bordwell pulls this off with remarkable lightness of touch." - Murray Smith, University of Kent"

"This book is simply first-rate and exhaustive in terms of its scholarship and research, and is well-written, insightful, accessible, and engaging. Bordwell throws a wrench into the ways that Hollywood cinema since the 1960s is frequently taught and theorized, presenting a complex but clear picture that will stand as one of the most important books on American film from the 1960s to the present."&#151;John Caldwell, Professor of Film and Television, UCLA"In The Way Hollywood Tells It, David Bordwell treats us to an analytic account and history of the craft of modern Hollywood filmmaking which is at once concise and detailed. There is no shortage of scholarly literature on contemporary Hollywood, but none of it lives up to the standards set by Bordwell here. No one else has this range, depth, sophistication or authority. More remarkable still, Bordwell pulls this off with remarkable lightness of touch."&#151;Murray Smith, University of Kent"David Bordwell is our best writer on the cinema. He is deeply informed about films, he loves them, and he writes about them with a clarity and perception that makes the prose itself a joy to read. Because he sees movies so freshly and deeply he isn't deceived by the usual categories and finds excellence and experiment in unexpected places. For him it's no simple matter of the mainstream vs. the indies. By showing, often in shot-by-shot detail, how films communicate through style as much as subject and story, his book is liberating, allowing us to see precisely what films are doing, and why. I find David Bordwell's book to be simply astonishing."&#151;Roger Ebert"David Bordwell applies the descriptive techniques he's brought to the study of Ozu and Dreyer to recent American narrative cinema with his usual passionate rigor. The resulting study is clear-eyed and comprehensive, easily the best book on the subject so far. Bordwell is particularly insightful about how new technologies serve both to enhance AND limit the expressive range of current movie story-telling."&#151;Larry Gross"Alternatingly analytical and informative, but always entertaining, David Bordwell's The Way Hollywood Tells It makes sense of the art and business of recent American cinema like nothing else out there. This book should be required reading for all of us!"&#151;Mark Johnson"There is nobody writing about film with the wisdom and insight of David Bordwell. His work makes me feel as though the creative process I know and live through writing and shooting films is being thoughtfully examined and put in

a context. I recognize my journeys in his work and I learn about many other ways to journey as well. Bordwell shares and unfolds the meaningful linguistic/craft/syntactical choices all filmmakers make, from all cultures, choices besides the mere political, literary, symbolic and sexual which have been so saturated with attention. He finds the meaning in movies, instead of putting it there." James Mangold, director of Walk the Line

David Bordwell is one of the most widely read film scholars around, and not without reason: he writes with ease and elegance, his insights are often deep and almost always relevant, his starting points are usually essential for better understanding cinematic art. Is he always right? Of course not, he is not a religious profet or Jacques Lacan (Oops!). However he usually describes the area of his study quite well, cites references and data he would like you to check in order to see whether he is right and, well, does serious scholarly work. Not a small achievent in a fastly globalizing (and fastly "mcdonaldsizing") academic community of cultural gurus who know everything about everything... Therefore, when you disagree with him (as I sometimes do), you usually know what your are disagreeing about and why. This book is another Bordwell's insightful contribution to the study of American and global cinema (styles in cinema are basically more international/global than in literature; probably less than in classical music or jazz), explaining how contemporary cinema develops from older stylistical patterns. From the era of silent movies or Slavko Vorkapic's experiments for Frank Capra to modern-era (greatly digitalized) blockbusters, Hollywood's manners and procedures of telling a story can be compared with quite a fruitfull result. Ofcourse, simple description of stylistic trend or procedure does not directly serve as a proof of aesthetic value, but the subject of this book is, basically, style, not aesthetic value or anything else that can be connected to (and is intertwined on many levels with) style. This book is equally useful for scholars, teachers and (thanks to his nice style and clear argumentation) students of cinema and all other educated art lovers.

Very useful for a movie critic or for any film lover. Bordwell deserves his reputation as one of the great and most influential film academics of our time.

David Bordwell's **THE WAY HOLLYWOOD TELLS IT** deconstructs classical and modern movies by penetrating analysis of both story, editing, and filming. His explanation of Cameron Crowe's *Jerry Maguire* and Crowe's plotting is as good as any review you're read from Kael or Hunter. Bordwell explores how longer takes have been replaced in the modern scene by shorter, quicker edits in the

name of not avoiding audience boredom. The number of movies listed is prodigious. The research involved is staggering. A first-rate book for any movie lover.

Great~

I started buying products in this year and i'm very satisfied with your service. It's easier and cheaper than our products here in Portugal. I'll be back soon on !LÃ¡zaro SilvaSÃƒÆ'Ã ¤o Mateus, Terceira IslandAzores, Portugal

Excellent study of post-classical Hollywood filmmaking, 11 Dec 2009I highly recommend this book for both students of film theory and for working filmmakers. It is fair, balance, well written and extremely well researched. The book is split into two sections - one covering story in post 1960 film and the other analysing directorial style during the same period.In the first section Bordwell provides a positive view on modern scriptwriting. His detailed analysis of 'Jerry Maguire' is a fabulous case in point. Through telling the story of Cameron Crowe's journey to emulate his hero Billy Wilder and by breaking down the script's core components Bordwell shows us the complexity in some modern Hollywood fare.In the second half of the book Bordwell neatly illustrates the lack of focus in modern direction, taking 'Two Week's Notice' and 'Lord Of The Rings' as examples of muddled directions. But this is an oversimplification as he also illustrates the changing tastes of modern directors. For example, he presents a comparison of the same scene in the 1968 and 1999 versions of 'The Thomas Crown Affair' highlighting the different approaches.

Like the author's other works, this is a highly meticulous and empirical study of the way contemporary Hollywood films function. Paying close attention to selected films by intensive frame analysis, Bordwell calls into question many contemporary "sibboleths" concerning the status of "post-Hollywood" which he reveals as having more connections with its classical counterpart than most critics believe. His attention to fine detail and references to "American Cinematographer" and screenwriting manuals reveal that he has really done his homework. He challenges his contemporaries to do likewise before they engage in problematic "post" judgements whether they be on the realm of postmodernism, post-colonialism, and post- anything which may become academic equivalents of those formerly fashionable platform shoes or flared trousers that often date episodes of the 1970s British cop series THE SWEENEY. The references to contemporary Hong Kong cinema and analysis of films such as Johnny To's A HERO NEVER DIES are also valuable

components of this book. Like DRAGNET's Sergeant Joe Friday, Bordwell insists that we supply facts based on viewing the evidence ourselves. We should not ignore important empirical aspects before we begin to make meanings that may eventually prove to be non-substantial. Those who choose to avoid the well-researched findings of this book should be issued with speeding tickets and forced to attend a scholarly version of "community service" or "boot camp" involving the detailed viewings of as many films as possible, reading interviews with film directors, and studying important journals such as AMERICAN CINEMATOGRAPHER. This is equally important for those newly converted "film experts" in English Departments of postmodernist persuasion who recently discover Laura Mulvey's 1975 essay on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" and regard it as a "gospel" truth which remains unaltered today! These feelings are more akin to non-linguistic theological studies and not the highly textual, linguistic based explorations of biblical and near eastern studies that rely on studies in pre-semitic studies, Canaanite, Aramaic, and Arabic studies to reveal key empirical structures influencing "holy writ." This is another indispensable work by an important scholar that every serious professor and student should learn from even if it only involves better interpretation and a more professional "making of meaning."

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