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Everything Is Cinema: The Working Life Of Jean-Luc Godard



Synopsis

A "serious-minded and meticulously detailed . . . account of the lifelong artistic journey" of one of the most influential filmmakers of our age (The New York Times) When Jean-Luc Godard wed the ideals of filmmaking to the realities of autobiography and current events, he changed the nature of cinema. Unlike any earlier films, Godard's work shifts fluidly from fiction to documentary, from criticism to art. The man himself also projects shifting images—cultural hero, fierce loner, shrewd businessman. Hailed by filmmakers as a—if not the—key influence on cinema, Godard has entered the modern canon, a figure as mysterious as he is indispensable. In *Everything Is Cinema*, critic Richard Brody has amassed hundreds of interviews to demystify the elusive director and his work. Paying as much attention to Godard's technical inventions as to the political forces of the postwar world, Brody traces an arc from the director's early critical writing, through his popular success with *Breathless*, to the grand vision of his later years. He vividly depicts Godard's wealthy conservative family, his fluid politics, and his tumultuous dealings with women and fellow New Wave filmmakers. *Everything Is Cinema* confirms Godard's greatness and shows decisively that his films have left their mark on screens everywhere.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Comprehensive and fascinating, this critical biography of one of the leading filmmakers of the French New Wave, Jean-Luc Godard, by New Yorker editor and film critic Brody offers the significant events and achievements of the cinematic innovator who combined an

eye-opening concoction of art, politics, music, personal values and social mores. The author reveals an isolated yet driven creative genius who rises from writing articles for the pioneering Cahiers du Cinéma magazine with Truffaut, Rivette and Rohmer to soaring early successes with his films Breathless, Contempt, Masculine Feminine, A Married Woman to the later controversial gems, First Name: Carmen, Hail Mary and Detective. Godard, according to Brody, compares in critical importance to Picasso in his artistry, as the director's puzzling complexity is revealed through scores of interviews with family, colleagues and crew. Throughout the book, the key personal elements of Godard's chaotic love life provide added spark. This is a completely enjoyable and revealing account of an enigmatic director whose singular creativity will not allow him to make commercial compromises. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“Richard Brody's biography of Godard--arguably the most important, enigmatic, and exciting filmmaker of the second half of the 20th century--effortlessly weaves intellectual history, a personal saga, and an authoritative reading of the films themselves into a seamless web. It virtually crackles with intelligence, and is a must read for anyone interested in cinema.” Peter Biskind, author of Gods and Monsters: Thirty Years of Writing on Film and Culture “Full of lucid analysis and human context, Richard Brody's book performs a heroic act in rescuing Godard and his growing shelf of works from the prison of myth and theory, from the cult of youth and the cult of the '60s, restoring him to his place as an engaged, hard-working artist.”

Jonathan Lethem, author of The Fortress of Solitude “Godard changed the movies as much as the American masters he grew up on: Welles, Hawks, Hitchcock, and the rest. He is as original as Picasso--but unlike Picasso, he has been denied the biography he has always deserved. This is it. Just at the moment when the New Wave turns fifty, Richard Brody has given us Everything is Cinema, a remarkable book which describes with sharp intelligence a great and elusive artist's times, intellect, passions, and work.” Wes Anderson, writer and director of Rushmore, The Royal Tenenbaums, and The Life Aquatic “Everything Is Cinema is better than a biography, it is a novel. And a great novel, in which one discovers the story of a man who almost picked the wrong art form, a struggling writer who became an immense filmmaker.” Bernard-Henri Lévy, author of American Vertigo

Extremely insightful text, heavy with citations, interviews and whatnot. Mr Brody's tremendous work shines throughout its almost 700 pages. Highly recommended to whoever cares for cinema,

particularly "art movies".

One of the best books on Godard that I've read!

I was glad to get a book about Godard's work and not a boring read about early family upbringing and struggles. This will appeal to aficionados of Jean-Luc's difficult cinema. It's like having a documentary about all of his films. Brody's writing is detailed and gets to the heart of the matter, just like his New Yorker pieces. I read it slowly to savor each chapter and movie. It's a must-read for filmmakers and students of the director.

Dedicated, passionate, illuminating portrait of a body of work in motion.

The thing that struck me as I read this was that Brody seems more enamored of the idea of what he thinks Godard was doing as an artist than he is with the actual films he made - at least with the films he made during the first decade or so. Colin MacCabe's *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at Seventy* seems more readable and more able to see the films as something other than opaque autobiography. Needless to say either book will tell you more than you ever wanted to know about Godard's personal life, although MacCabe, unlike Brody, shows some reticence in exploring his love life.

"(Richard Brody's) *Everything is Cinema*", famous French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy is quoted as commenting on the back cover, "is better than a biography, it is a novel". Fiction, in other words. I prefer to invoke the title of a Charles Mingus composition, viz "All the things you'd be by now if Sigmund Freud's wife were your mother": Over nearly 600 pages, page by page, precisely and adoringly, emerges the profile of a total neurotic, a mysogenist misanthrope, a miser. A bit of a private life component may be the spice of a biography, but if nothing else but his private (ie off-screen) life is advanced to determine and explain all of Godard's films and video activities, the reader tires rather quickly: In the end, *Le mépris* (1963) is an excellent and intelligent film because Alberto Moravia's underlying novel is great (sociological rather than psychological) analysis, and Godard a skilled and innovative *metteur en scene*. Some things are irrelevant, like his failed alliance with a relatively more mature Marina Vlady - Anne-Marie Miéville, the author rightly remarks, will be the first and only of Godard's women of equal caliber. And whether Godard held hands with Brigitte Bardot walking up the stairs of Curzio Malaparte's avant-gardist villa is

about as irrelevant as his "accusation" of François Truffaut of having had a candid affair with Jacqueline Bisset during the turning of *La nuit américaine* (1973), and not showing it in that movie... ("how come only the director has no affair in that film?"). Brody's method of endless narration makes it difficult for him, and subsequently the reader, to in any defined way assess the weight/quality of Godard's individual films. This is perhaps the main weakness of the book. Also, it contains a series of factual errors in the assessment of the bitter feud with Truffaut, which (as can be read up in the latter's many biographies) was basically instigated by Godard's vile and foul sneering. Truffaut was not the only one who got that treatment, but he is the one who most decidedly stood up against the intellectual smear campaign. Not an easy subject; a wealth of material, well written without any doubt, but still: not going anywhere in particular. fbus 37 - Everything Is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard by Richard Brody - 26/6/2012

Jean-Luc Godard's output has been prodigious, and this massive book by Richard Brody manages to cover most of Godard's films up to 2004 and how they relate to the auteur's life. Brody, who first came to prominence as a writer for *The New Yorker*, has seen every one of Godard's films, and not only does he take us from Godard's early life and first feature *A BOUT DE SOUFFLE* up to his then most-recent feature *NOTRE MUSIQUE*, but he also describes Godard's many short films and television works, some of which are little known. Proceeding chronologically through Godard's life, Brody first describes the context for how each film was made: Godard's personal relationships with the actors or screenwriters involved, where the money for the shoot was coming from, and how the shoot itself proceeded. Without getting too in-depth -- this is fundamentally a work of biography, not of very close analysis -- Brody describes the general plot and main episodes of each of the films. Brody sometimes claims that events on screen reflect events in Godard's private (usually romantic) life, and from other reviews here these claims seem to be contentious. However, that Godard's early films mirrored his relationships with Anna Karina and Maria Viala was noted even in the 1960s by people close to Godard, and Brody is often basing himself on published sources. (Nearly all factual claims in the book are sourced, and the book ends with a lengthy section of endnotes). Brody finds Godard's work to be interesting and often rewarding overall, but he does not believe that every film that Godard has made is of equal value, and he sometimes mentions his preferences. He feels that Godard was at an artistic nadir in the late 1960s and early 1970s with his politically radical films (the Dziga Vertov years). Later he calls Godard's early 1980s *PASSION* a misstep but its successor *PRENOM: CARMEN* a fine work. He also notes with disdain Godard's increasing anti-semitism in the 1990s. For any cinephile wanting an overview of Jean-Luc Godard's work and the fascinating

circumstances of how Godard's imagination became films, this is currently the best reference. My only regret is that the book stops in 2004, and Godard has continued to make films in the years since.

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