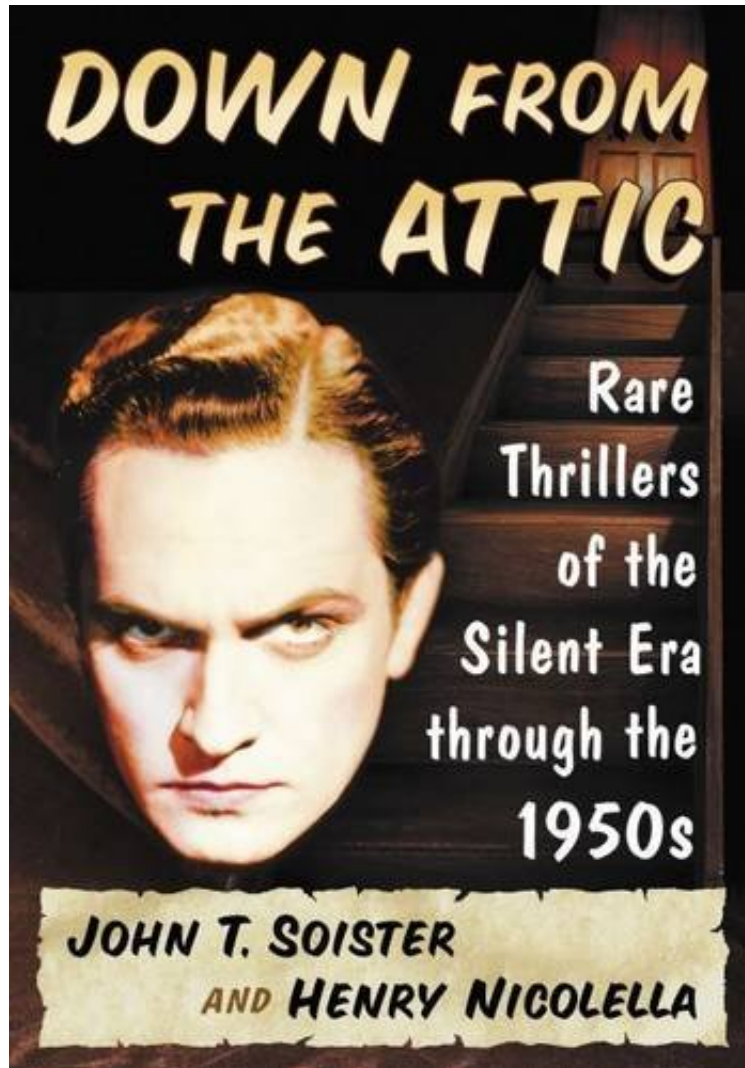


(Free pdf) Down from the Attic: Rare Thrillers of the Silent Era through the 1950s

## Down from the Attic: Rare Thrillers of the Silent Era through the 1950s

*John T. Soister, Henry Nicolella*  
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**John T. Soister, Henry Nicolella : Down from the Attic: Rare Thrillers of the Silent Era through the 1950s**  
before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Down from the Attic: Rare Thrillers of the Silent Era through the 1950s:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Even Movie Fans Who Are Hardcore May Find Some Chapters of InterestBy Randy StaffordThis one came free from LibraryThing, and the only reason I picked it up was the section on the various movie adaptations of Bernhard Kellermanns 1913 novel Der Tunnel. I first came across reference to it in John J. Pierces Foundations of Science Fiction: A Study in Imagination and Evolution which described it as giving

epic scope to industrial sf in its tale of constructing a transatlantic tunnel for rail travel. I did like the opening chapter which covered the four movie adaptations of that novel. Soister and Nicolella cover a movie or group of movies in each chapter. They do it with wit and engaging asides as well as covering a lot of film history. Films are always placed in a larger context be it biographical, the development of a genre, a nation's film history, or accounts of certain film series and remakes. It's a book for hard core movie lovers, in this case those who love horror, science fiction, and mystery films. Many of these movies are either vanished or available for viewing only if you show up at a museum or the Library of Congress. Literary reconstruction is the only way most of us can experience them though Soister and Nicolella often tell you where the extant ones can be viewed. They also sum up the plot of the movies. That means you get some small print and mind-numbing, tedious plot synopses (often officially registered for copyright purposes with the Library of Congress). Worst is all fifteen chapters of *Sky Ranger* aka *The Man Who Stole the Moon*. (No, he doesn't and the moon plays almost no part in the story.) It's used as an example of silent, somewhat science fictioney, movie serials. I'd already seen, years ago, the 1930 science fiction musical *Just Imagine* about the wonders of 1980. (Pills for food, resurrection from the dead, names like J-21, and New York City doing a sort of eugenics-lite in their marriage regulation.) After reading this book, I'd like to see *Death Takes a Vacation*. (That's Fredric March as Death glowering on the cover.) And I'd like to see the lurid, mad scientist *Hispanic Horrors of El misterio del rostro plido* [*The Mystery of the Ghastly Face*], *El bal macabre* [*The Macabre Trunk*], and *Una luz en la ventana* [*A Light in the Window*]. And I'd like to see the pacifist science fiction movie *High Treason* from 1929 in which the women of 1940 (or maybe 1950, the producers seemed a bit uncertain) try to stop a war between the United States of Europe and the Federated Atlantic States. It's paired with the more ambiguous *Men Must Fight* as examples of interwar anxieties and opinions about another global conflict. For completions sake, I'll briefly list the other chapters. *Sherlock Holmes*, deals with the 1922 film of that name which was by no means the first film dealing with the famous detective. *First Looks: Dag grinsende Gesicht* [*The Grinning Face*]; *Die Insel der Verschollenen* [*Island of the Lost*] covers the first two movie adaptations of Victor Hugo's *L'Homme qui rit* and H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, respectively. Two other less literary, but still popular, stories and their first movie versions are covered in *The Monkey's Paw* [1923]; *Sweeney Todd* [1928] Charlie Chan fans will be interested in *The House Without a Key*, the first movie serial with Charlie Chan, albeit on screen for about four minutes. It actually featured a Japanese actor as Chan. *Forgotten Faces* looks at a 1928 thriller with an unusual premise: a criminal who wants to be killed by his victim. Based on Richard Washburn Child's story *A Whiff of Heliotrope*, it was filmed three more times. *Les Fantmes de Paris: Chri-Bibi*; *The Phantom of Paris* looks at those two films and their place in the plethora of phantom movies. *Fog; Terror Aboard* looks at two thrillers, from 1933, that featured mayhem on the high seas and that sank at the box office. *The Horror: The Patchwork Cinema of Bud Pollard* looks at the eponymous film producer. His output may even have been less interesting than Ed Wood's. The most interesting thing about him is that he literally died from a joke. *Return of the Terror* looks at 1933, not a banner year for the horror film and a film based on an Edgar Wallace play featuring a maniacal arch-criminal/master of disguise, and not some fiend of supernatural origin. *Der Hund von Baskerville* looks at one of Hitler's favorite films, a 1937 adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The book's subjects are arranged chronologically, and it concludes with the 1951 Czechoslovakian film *Csav Peka a Peka Csa* [*The Emperor's Baker, the Baker's Emperor*], a musical-comedy take on the Golem legend. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fun and Accessible By Blake Frain I consider myself a bit of a film buff and, despite not having been a really big fan of genre films, I'm married to a man who is obsessed with the Universal Monster films (*Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *The Mummy*, etc.) so I've learned to appreciate golden age cinema as well. As a matter of fact, I now count films like *Metropolis*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Nosferatu* and *White Zombie* amongst my favorites for their atmosphere and awesome visuals. And of course I've always enjoyed watching cheesy old horror films, just for a good laugh. *Mystery Science Theatre 2000* started me on that. So anyhow, taking all that into account, this book seemed like a perfect addition to my library. Not to say I didn't enter into this with a fair bit of trepidation because the last book of film criticism I attempted to read (*Race, Oppression and the Zombie* by Christopher Moreman) was like a college textbook - so intellectually dense and bone-dry, I couldn't even get through the first 25 pages. I'm happy to report that this book is exactly the opposite of that one. I knew right from the light-hearted introduction that this would be a fun and breezy read and I wasn't disappointed. Somehow authors Soister and Nicolella manage to impart a ton of information about each film without talking over the reader's head. They don't pander and are very honest about each film - the good, the bad and the ugly - while still making all of them seem interesting and worth checking out. I shared this book with both my husband and sister (also a horror film fan) and neither had heard of most of the films which certainly appeals to the snob in me who's always seeking out obscure oddities that no one else knows about. I enjoyed this book so much that I actually checked out the publisher's website and ended up purchasing a book on Giallo films for my sister as a Christmas gift. An excellent book for any film lover.

Much has been written (and rewritten) about classic horror and science fiction films like *Nosferatu* and *Metropolis*, as well as not-so-classic pictures like *Bride of the Monster* and *The Hideous Sun Demon*. Yet some genre films have fallen through the cracks. The 24 films--some elusive, some easily found on YouTube--examined in this book all

suffered critical neglect and were prematurely stacked in the attic. The authors bring them back into the light, beginning with *Der Tunnel* (1915), about the building of a transatlantic tunnel, and ending with *The Emperor's Baker--The Baker's Emperor* (1951), a bizarre Marxist take on the Golem legend. A variety of thrillers are covered--*Fog* (1933), *Return of the Terror* (1934), *Forgotten Faces* (1928)--along with such sci-fi leaps into the future as *The Sky Ranger* (1921), *High Treason* (1929) and *Just Imagine* (1930). Early adaptations include *The Man Who Laughs* (1928), *The Monkey's Paw* (1923), *Hound of the Baskervilles* (1937) and *Sweeney Todd* (1928). Rare stills and background material are included in a discussion of Hispanic vintage horror. The career of exploitation auteur, Bud Pollard (*The Horror*, 1933) is examined.

s from the first volume *Up from the Vault*: "unique...highly interesting...important piece of history." --*Monsters from the Vault*"A great read and a great book." --*Little Shoppe of Horrors*"Magnificent...a must...important...wonderful." --*VideoScope*About the AuthorJohn T. Soister is a teacher of modern and classical languages, and lives in Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania. Henry Nicolella lives in Syracuse, New York.