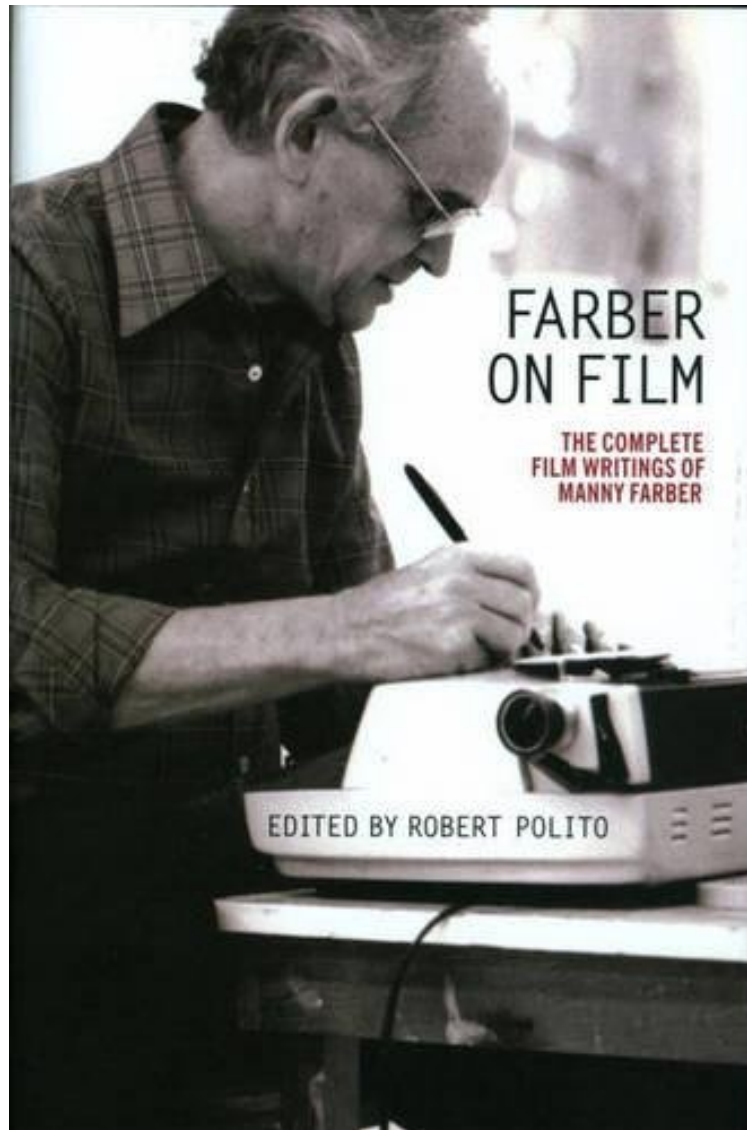


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Farber on Film: The Complete Film Writings of Manny Farber: A Special Publication of The Library of America

Manny Farber

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#1022681 in Books 2016-02-02 2016-02-02 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.20 x 1.61 x 6.101, .81 #File Name: 1598534696824 pages | File size: 62.Mb

Manny Farber : Farber on Film: The Complete Film Writings of Manny Farber: A Special Publication of The Library of America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Farber on Film: The Complete Film Writings of Manny Farber: A Special Publication of The Library of America:

27 of 27 people found the following review helpful. Following the Career of a GeniisBy Richard M. SolaThis is a

long overdue collection of the complete film writings of one of the great film observers of all time. Manny Farber was much, much more than a film critic. He looked, really looked, at films in ways that no one else did during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. He dissected films with a painter's eye, seeing what most everyone else missed. He looked at tough guy low budget movies. He looked at Hollywood big production films. He looked at foreign films and experimental films. He looked at cartoons. And then he wrote. Farber wrote in a way that no one else did. Farber started writing in the 1940s. His early reviews are still interesting as starting points before seeing the films he discusses. He had an uncanny knack for separating the fluff from substance and stopping great films and great directors long before others did (Hawks, Preston Sturges, Sam Fuller, Fassbinder, Herzog, and Michael Snow to name a few directors Farber championed). And he moved past mere plot summary and analysis to reviewing films in a whole new way. This collection lets the reader watch Farber grow over time in his understanding of movies and in his writing. By the 1960s, he is writing essays (like his famous and influential "White Elephant Art vs. Termite Art"). His later collaboration with Patricia Patterson, an artist and Farber's wife, resulted in pieces that are never short of brilliant. Farber is at his best when he is pulling and pushing the reader through a maze of thoughts, imagines and word gymnastics to come out the other end of the essay with a whole new way of looking at things. To say that he is non-linear in this thought process is an understatement. Only a great writer like Farber can pull it off. And then, he stopped writing about film in the 1970s to devote his remaining years to painting. He said all that he needed to say about film. And he said it in a way that no other writer has done before or since. (Yes, there are many who have tried to imitate his style, but it really can't be done.) Reading a few pages of Farber is a revelation. Reading a book of Farber can change the way you see film, writing, and the role of the observer/critic in the world. Congratulations to Library of America for the handsome edition it has published. (Note that it is larger than the typical book that they put out.) 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful reading for a film buff By Robbo Cicco A great book of reviews and essays from a long career. It helps to have a knowledge of film history, as he references some fairly obscure movies over the course of the collection. 7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Complete... with mistakes By Daryl Chin This collection is supposed to be definitive, and it is (in the sense of collecting all of Manny Farber's film writings from the multitude of sources throughout his career, from *The Nation* and *The New Republic* in the 1940s, all the way to articles from *Artforum* and *Film Comment* in the 1960s and 1970s). But one problem was that in many of the original journals, the editing was sloppy, and there were mistakes, which have simply not been corrected and have simply been perpetuated into the future, as the Library of America continues its slipshod methodology of never having to say it's sorry. Mistakes and important omissions. For example: in a review of the experimental films of the Kinesis group from San Francisco, Farber mentions a filmmaker named "Gordon Belson". There has never been a "Gordon Belson", the name is JORDAN Belson (who just died in August of 2011). This mistake was made in the original review in *The Nation* of October 11, 1952; it should have been corrected, but how can it be corrected when the editors don't know this is a mistake? For example: in the introduction and the chronology, it is never mentioned that "Manny Farber's" name is Emanuel Farber. An entire book of over 800 pages, and there is no mention (at all) of Mr. Farber's actual name. What kind of editing is this? Aside from that, this is an exhilarating collection, because Manny Farber is one of the most iconoclastic and amusing critics the movies have ever had, a true original.

Manny Farber (1917-2008) was a unique figure among American movie critics. Champion of what he called "termite art" (focused, often eccentric virtuosity as opposed to "white elephant" monumentality), master of a one-of-a-kind prose style whose jazz-like phrasing and incandescent twists and turns made every review an adventure, he has long been revered by his peers. Susan Sontag called him "the liveliest, smartest, most original film critic this country ever produced"; for Peter Bogdanovich, he was "razor-sharp in his perceptions" and "never less than brilliant as a writer." Farber was an early discoverer of many filmmakers later acclaimed as American masters: Val Lewton, Preston Sturges, Samuel Fuller, Raoul Walsh, Anthony Mann. A prodigiously gifted painter himself, he brought to his writing an artist's eye for what was on the screen. Alert to any filmmaker, no matter how marginal or unsung, who was "doing go-for-broke art and not caring what comes of it," he was uncompromising in his contempt for pretension and trendiness, for, as he put it, directors who "pin the viewer to the wall and slug him with wet towels of artiness and significance." The excitement of his criticism, however, has less to do with his particular likes and dislikes than with the quality of attention he paid to each film as it unfolds, to the "chains of rapport and intimate knowledge" in its moment-to-moment reality. To transcribe that knowledge he created a prose that, in Robert Polito's words, allows for "oddities, muddles, crises, contradictions, dead ends, multiple alternatives, and divergent vistas." The result is critical essays that are themselves works of art. *Farber on Film* brings together this extraordinary body of work in its entirety for the first time, from his early and previously uncollected weekly reviews for *The New Republic* and *The Nation* to his brilliant later essays (some written in collaboration with his wife Patricia Patterson) on Godard, Fassbinder, Herzog, Scorsese, Altman, and others. Featuring an introduction by editor Robert Polito that examines in detail the stages of Farber's career and his enduring significance as writer and thinker, *Farber on Film* is a landmark volume that will be a classic in American criticism.

From Booklist*Starred * With serious film criticism probably in an inexorable decline due to vanishing venues for publication and the dumbing-down of the moviegoing audience, these writings by the late Farber (1917-2008) constitute a pointed reminder of what will be lost. Farber is best known for championing the B movies of such maverick filmmakers as producer Val Lewton and director Sam Fuller, most notably in a signature 1962 essay in which he excoriated moribund white elephant art and praised the termite art made by eager, eccentric artists, art that goes always forward eating its own boundaries. This long-overdue volume amasses all of Farber's cinematic writings, from weekly reviews for the *New Republic* and the *Nation* in the 1940s and 50s to wider-ranging essays of the 60s and 70s for such specialized publications as *Artforum*. Throughout, Farber's iconoclastic viewpointshe panned *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Casablanca*and virtuosic prose provide limitless rewards for readers who can negotiate his unexpected intellectual and stylistic turns. The insight and imagination Farber brings to his subjects, whether a Bugs Bunny cartoon or, in his last published film writing, the uncompromising French masterpiece *Jeanne Dielman*, is an exemplar for criticism of any sort. --Gordon Flagg
About the Author Robert Polito, editor, is a poet, biographer, and critic whose books include *Doubles*, *Hollywood God*, *A Readers Guide to James Merrills The Changing Light at Sandover*, and *Savage Art: A Biography of Jim Thompson*, for which he received a National Book Critics Circle Award and an Edgar Award. He directs the Graduate Writing Program at the New School in New York City.