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Visions of Yesterday (Routledge Library Editions: Cinema)

Jeffrey Richards

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Film is an important source of social history, as well as having been a popular art form from the early twentieth century. This study shows how a society, consciously or unconsciously, is mirrored in its cinema. It considers the role of the cinema in dramatizing popular beliefs and myths, and takes three case studies – American populism, British imperialism, German Nazism – to explain how a nation's pressures, tensions and hopes come through in its films. Examining the American cinema is accomplished by analysing the careers of three great directors, John Ford, Frank Capra and Leo McCarey, while the British and German cinemas are studied by theme. The analysis of the British Empire as seen in film broke exciting new ground with a pioneering account of 'the cinema of Empire' when it was first published in 1973.

With full filmographies and a carefully selected bibliography it is an outstanding work of reference and its lively approach makes it a delight to read.

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