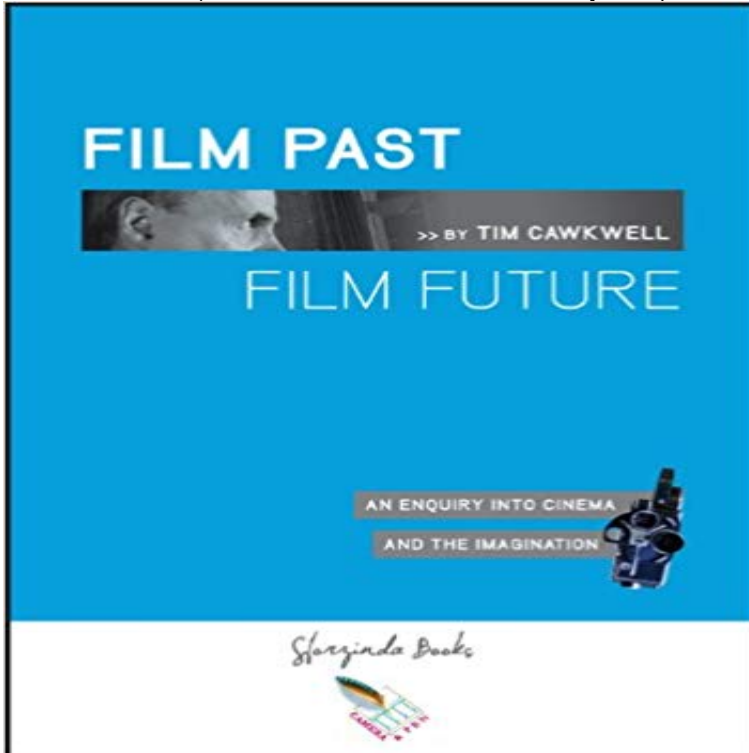


Film Past, Film Future: an enquiry into cinema and the imagination



What is the cinematic imagination? Is it the spectator using his or her imagination in a creative manner to absorb the images presented? Or is it the spectator spellbound before the film-makers imagination spilled out on the screen? In the first, the imagination is firmly in the minds of the spectators; in the second, in the mind of the filmmaker. *Film Past, Film Future* ranges widely over the history of the cinema in all its forms to show how film-makers have exploited both their own imagination and that of the spectator to create compelling films, narrative and non-narrative. Part One covers the way the cinema has delved deep into history, into contemporary events, and into tales of the subconscious indeed the whole of the human condition to exploit the desires, the fears and the obsessions of people across the globe. It is capped by a long essay on the cinema and the Holocaust to illustrate the immense effort the cinema has made to represent the unrepresentable. Part Two then gets to grip with the question of how the cinema is unique, and focuses in particular on the way in which it manipulates time. It identifies a weakness in the fact that film-makers have yet to develop more subtle and sophisticated ways of depicting interiority, and concludes with an assessment of whether conditions are right for a Shakespeare to emerge in the cinema. In undertaking this journey, Tim Cawkwell draws on the examples of films right from the invention of the cinema at the end of the nineteenth century up to the present day, and across the complete spectrum of film-making: silent and sound; commercial, arthouse, experimental; narrative and documentary; long and short. Reference is made to drama, opera, literature and painting in order to seek continuities between the classical artistic canons and current cinematic ones. Along the way it takes a swipe at the cinema of hyperbole from which we currently suffer,

in a plea for greater exactitude, and outlines some of the drawbacks inherent in the theatrical stylistics that have held too great sway in much film-making. *Film Past, Film Future*, written in a crisp and highly readable style, will stimulate anyone who takes an interest in and derives pleasure from watching films. TIM CAWKWELL is a freelance writer with a lifelong interest in the cinema. He co-edited *The World Encyclopaedia of Film* (1972) and is the author of *The Filmgoers Guide to God* (2004). He has published articles in journals, and his essays and comments appear on his website, www.timcawkwell.co.uk. From 1968 to 1987 he was a film-maker, first in Standard 8 mm then in 16 mm.

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