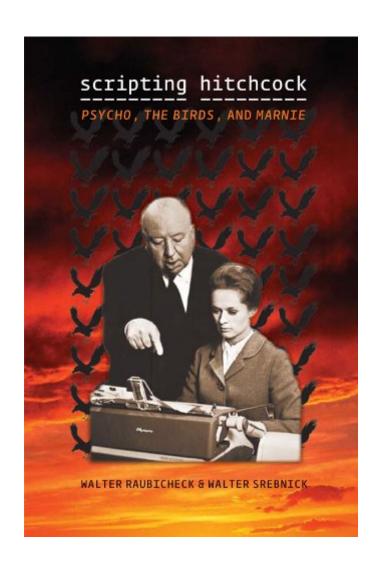# Scripting Hitchcock: Psycho, The Birds, And Marnie

Synopsis

Nominated for a nonfiction Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America, Scripting Hitchcock explores the collaborative process between Alfred Hitchcock and the screenwriters he hired to write the scripts for three of his greatest films: Psycho, The Birds, and Marnie. Drawing from extensive interviews with the screenwriters and other film technicians who worked for Hitchcock, Walter Raubicheck and Walter Srebnick illustrate how much of the filmmaking process took place not on the set or in front of the camera, but in the adaptation of the sources, the mutual creation of plot and characters by the director and the writers, and the various revisions of the written texts of the films. Â Hitchcock allowed his writers a great deal of creative freedom, which resulted in dynamic screenplays that expanded traditional narrative and defied earlier conventions. Critically examining the question of authorship in film, Raubicheck and Srebnick argue that Hitchcock did establish visual and narrative priorities for his writers, but his role in the writing process was that of an editor. While the writers and their contributions have generally been underappreciated, this study reveals that all the dialogue and much of the narrative structure of the films were the work of screenwriters Jay Presson Allen, Joseph Stefano, and Evan Hunter. The writers also shaped American cultural themes into material specifically for actors such as Janet Leigh, Tippi Hedren, and Tony Perkins. This volume gives due credit to those writers who gave narrative form to Hitchcock's filmic vision.

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Customer Reviews

It's appropriate that this book is well-written, considering that it begins at the ground-level where Hitchcock began when he made these three films: with the writers of Psycho, The Birds and Marnie. The reader feels brought into the very room in which Hitchcock collaborated with the writers (and tried to work with the ones he dismissed) to create each film from its roots: the scripts, that Hitchcock translated into movies with multiple layers of meanings. The two authors of the book met with the film writers, interviewed them and, it's clear, came to know them quite well. A reader gets to know them, too.I've seen almost all of Hitchcock's films, from those he made in England into his Hollywood years. As an ordinary movie-goer, I was enthralled by the three discussed in "Scripting." Reading it opened up depths that I had not suspected in these films. More dope me. The book earns a five-star rating. And a re-reading.

I found the book to be a bit dry but nonetheless very informative. More scholarly than a casual read. My one compliant is that you would think by reading this that Hitch's other films were largely negligible and unimportant. I suppose having all this research on these three great films, the authors weren't particularly interested in tying them into the canon as a whole. Some interesting anecdotes but this is definitely for the serious fan/student.

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