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The Best Film You've Never Seen: 35 Directors Champion the Forgotten or Critically Savaged Movies They Love

By Robert K. Elder



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In this book, 35 directors champion their favorite overlooked or critically savaged gems. Among these guilty pleasures, almost-masterpieces, and undeniable classics in need of revival are unsung noirs (*Murder by Contract*), famous flops (*Can't Stop the Music*, *Joe Versus the Volcano*), art films (*L'ange*), theatrical adaptations (*The Iceman Cometh*), B-movies (*Killer Klowns from Outer Space*), and even a few Oscar-winners (*Some Came Running*).

In these conversations, the filmmakers defend their choices. These films, they argue, deserve a larger audience and for their place in movie history to be reconsidered. But the conversations' tangents, diversions, and side trips provide as much insight into the directors' own approach to moviemaking as into the film they're discussing. The filmmakers are the perfect hosts, often setting the tone, managing expectations, and giving advice about how you should watch each movie. They're often brutally honest about a film's shortcomings or the reasons why it was lost in the first place.

The Best Film You've Never Seen is not only a guide to some badly overlooked movies but a bold attempt to rewrite film history.



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Editorial Review

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In *The Film That Changed My Life* (2011), Elder interviewed movie directors about the films that inspired them. This new book offers a twist on that theme as 35 directors tell us about their favorite overlooked or critically panned movies. There's a good mixture of directors, from famous names (Guillermo del Toro, Peter Bogdanovich, John Woo) to filmmakers who haven't yet become known by mass audiences. And the films are pretty diverse, too, ranging from unsung greats (the British true-crime film, *10 Rillington Place*) to films widely considered to be, well, awful (*Can't Stop the Music*, starring the Village People). The question-and-answer format allows readers to hear the directors' reasons for their choices in their own words; Jonathan Levine, for example, points out that somehow, perhaps because of its badness, *Can't Stop the Music* is about as entertaining as a movie could possibly be. Each interview explores its subject's relationship with his or her chosen film—when they first saw it, why they enjoy it so much—and ultimately the book isn't so much about the movies as it is about the moviemakers. Great fun for movie fans. --David Pitt

Review

"How necessary this book is! And how well judged and written! Some of the best films ever made, as Robert K. Elder proves, are lamentably all but unknown." —Roger Ebert, author and film critic

"I hate Robert Elder. While the rest of us struggle to come up with compelling content, he follows *The Film That Changed My Life* with another must-read for the novice and hard-core cinephile alike. Anyone who is passionate about art must be prepared to abandon the comfort of conventional wisdom to defend the denigrated and the dismissed; Elder and his impressive cast of commentators inspire us to continue battling for our beloved personal treasures." —Adam Kempenaar, critic/host, *Filmspotting*

"Sometimes it can be more of a pleasure to hear someone discuss a movie with love than it is to see the movie itself. The thoughts and enthusiasms of Richard Linklater, Guy Maddin, John Waters, and others are alone worth the price of admission—and Steve James describing a movie I already love is no less instructive." —Jonathan Rosenbaum, author and film critic

"It's always fascinating to learn which films filmmakers themselves admire, and even more so to read about movies they regard as underrated or virtually lost. Robert K. Elder has managed to coax absorbing, candid comments from directors as elusive as John Dahl, Steve James, and Alex Proyas." —Peter Cowie, author and film historian

"Anyone who loves movies should find fascinating stuff here." —*Hollywood & Mine*

"For a movie lover who enjoys discoveries and challenges, its 260-ish pages combine into something resembling sheer joy. Is it too early to ask for a sequel?" —*Oklahoma Gazette*

"Elder is successful in pulling thoughtful, stimulating commentary from an impressive group, which makes

for an illuminating look at eight decades of cinema across a variety of genres including musicals, comedies, thrillers, and theatrical adaptations. Verdict:

A well-written, lively read for pop culture fans and cinephiles alike. Film buffs especially will enjoy this foray into the fascinating world of cinematic shadows." —*Library Journal*

"It's a fascinating read . . . You can read it in easy chunks, or, as I did, devour it because you can't stop checking out what one more director had to say." —*Omaha World Herald*

About the Author

Robert K. Elder is the author of *The Film That Changed My Life, It Was Love When . . . , It Was Over When . . .*, and *Last Words of the Executed* and the editor of *John Woo: Interviews*. He is a journalist and teacher and has contributed articles to the *Chicago Tribune*, the *New York Times*, *Onion AV Club*, and many other publications.

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