Film books

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frame enlargements. Still, taken by a photographer during shooting, don't necessarily correspond closely to what the cameraman shot; enlargements, on the other hand, are not as clear, and are hard to make from cinecamera (wide-screen) prints.

Despite these problems, there are two notable series of films in book form. One, put out by Simon and Schuster, is divided into Classic Film Scripts--Grand Illusion, Potemkin, The Blue Angel, L'Age d'Or and Ubu Chien. And, Children of Paradise--and Modern Film Scripts Jules and Jim, Alphaville, The Bicycle Thief, The Seventh Seal, Ikiru, and The Third Man. The other, more recently from Grove Press, includes Masculine Feminine, I Am Curious (yellow), Rashomon, L'Avventura, and The 400 Blows.

The Simon and Schuster sets, as their titles imply, emphasize shooting scripts wherever possible. Thus, individual shots and camera positions are generally not too clearly distinguished, though this varies from film to film. In the shooting script and final print, there are significant differences and deletions are noted in the text. In Alphaville, where there was no shooting script at all, a reconstructed description of action is used instead. The source of the pictures is not identified.

The use of shooting scripts works best where there are variables in the final version, where the reader can see how the director's ideas evolved through shooting and editing. At the moment, still has a complete record of the final version. In addition to the text, there are usually a brief introduction and an abbreviated filmography, neither of which is an especially useful study aid--though they're better than nothing.

The books are overhead, and easily laid out, arranged at about half a dozen places and labels, and are not too clearly distinguished; the shooting script noted at the end in L'Avventura and The 400 Blows. Each shot is numbered, with its length in seconds at the end, and directions are fairly detailed. There are numerous pictures, all frame enlargements, and distributed throughout the book near descriptions of the shots they represent.

While some people might find the extra notation bothersome, it is often quite illuminating, especially where director's pieces together many brief shots. Notes on camera distance and movement are made clear by the adjacent pictures, whose scattered layout proves a fine idea.

What's most impressive about the Grove editions, though, is the wide array of supporting material. Much of the critical opinion available on each particular film (though not on the director in general) is included, as are interviews with those involved. What's more, the editors have reprinted the short stories on which two of the films were based; and there's even a summary of a 1964 MGM remake of Rashomon. Each book serves not just as a printed version of the film, but as a full introduction to its study.

The series' main fault is physical: the books are standard paperback size, and the layout is somewhat cramped. This may have helped to keep the price at $1.95, however.

Both series can be worth while, depending on one's interests; very likely they will be added to (if not as much as seems an especially popular candidate). Hopefully such books won't be used to publicize unproved new films, and poor editions won't get exclusive rights to good classic ones; they may not outlive printed plays, but they are generally bound to grow.

A Final Note: All of these books are carried by the Coop, though not many are in stock at any given time. A better place to try might be the New Genelles Cinema Bookstore, scheduled to open this week.

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