



Movie Love in the Fifties

James Harvey

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From the author of *Romantic Comedy* (“brilliant, meticulous, a monumental work of scholarship” —Margo Jefferson, *New York Times*), a fresh, illuminating look at the films of the 1950s.

Harvey begins by mapping the progression from 1940s film noir to the living-room melodramas of the 1950s. He shows us the femme fatale of the 1940s (Barbara Stanwyck, Joan Bennett) becoming blander and blonder (Doris Day, Debbie Reynolds) and younger and more traditionally sexy (Marilyn Monroe, Grace Kelly) in the 1950s. And he shows us how women were finally replaced as objects of desire by the new boy-men—Clift, Brando, Dean, and other rebels without causes.

Harvey discusses the films of Hitchcock (*Vertigo*), Ophuls (*The Reckless Moment*), Siodmak (*Christmas Holiday*), and Welles (*Touch of Evil*, perhaps the single greatest influence on the “post-classical” movies). He writes about the quintessential 1950s directors: Nicholas Ray, who made movies in the old Hollywood tradition (*In a Lonely Place*, *Johnny Guitar*), and Douglas Sirk, who portrayed suburbia as an emotional deathtrap (*Imitation of Life*, *Magnificent Obsession*). And he discusses the “serious” directors, such as Stanley Kramer and Elia Kazan, whose films exhibited powerful new realism.

Comprehensive, insightful, written with intelligence, humor, and affection, **Movie Love in the Fifties** is a masterful work of American film, and cultural, history.

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