



Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema

By Timothy Shary

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Drawing examples from hundreds of popular and lesser-known youth-themed films, offers a comprehensive examination of the representation of teenagers in American cinema since the 1980s

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1512794 in Books
- Published on: 2002-11-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .75" w x 6.00" l, 1.27 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 338 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this comprehensive academic work, film scholar Shary analyzes hundreds of "youth films" made between 1980 and 2001 to detail how young people are represented "within a codified system... [of]... certain subgenres and character types." He is particularly insightful in his breakdown of film genres (e.g., school-based, delinquent youth-centered, horror, science, sex) and on subgenre trends, such as changes in youth sex films since the prevalence of AIDS and more open attitudes toward teenage homosexuality. Appropriately, Shary criticizes some film reviewers for their condescending attitude toward teen films. But his constant reminders of how hard it is for him to remain objective doing research that "will always be imbued with the problematics of her or his personal ideological positions" are tiresome, as most readers accept this condition as the cost of reading another person's writing; seeking complete objectivity in a humanistic study seems misplaced. Still, Shary's conclusions raise thought-provoking questions, among them: what is the "elitist" cinema? and who are the "we" who "tell youth who they are"? The in-depth analysis and embrace of all types of teen movies, from Porky's (1981) to Save the Last Dance (2001), make this is a useful book, albeit one directed toward Shary's fellow academics.

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From Library Journal

Shary (screen studies, Clark Univ.) takes an engaging and thorough look at American teen movies of the last 20 years. Instead of discussing celluloid and popular culture as corrupting influences on youth or providing a guide to them, Shary treats them as reflections of adolescent culture. But this is a book about films (e.g., John Hughes's *The Breakfast Club* and Todd Solondz's *Welcome to the Dollhouse*), not the psychology of teenagers. He posits that the emergence of the multiplex cinemas in shopping malls led to a diversification of the teen/youth film, with a number of distinctive subgenres developing in response to the newly identifiable audience in the malls. He names five major subgenres—"Youth in School," "Delinquent Youth," "The Youth Horror Film," "Youth and Science," and "Youth in Love and Having Sex"—and devotes a chapter to each, referring to more than 900 films released between 1980 and 2001 to illustrate his points. Any film buff who grew up in the 1980s or 1990s will find this book fascinating, filled as it is with films we've either forgotten or are ashamed to discuss in our cinema studies classes. The book is aimed at an adult audience, though the language and diction are clear and not too weighted with jargon. YA librarians in particular may find the filmography and appended lists of best/worst films useful and the film analysis enlightening. Highly recommended for academic and public libraries.

Andrea Slonosky, Long Island Univ. Lib., Brooklyn, NY

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Review

"If an acned kid has shown his face on an American screen in twenty years, Shary has inspected his complexion." -- *Cineaste*, Spring 2003, p. 56 (Thomas Doherty)

"Shary's commentary is always thoughtful, judicious, and credible. He takes even the most inane films seriously..." -- *Choice*, Jan. 2003 (W. Graebner)

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