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AT HOME

BOOKS

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This month's cinema-lit at a glance



● SHUT UP AND SHOOT

Anthony Q. Artis, Focal Press, RRP £19.99

A superb addition to the 'how to' subsection of your library, Artis' tome is concise (and therefore easy to carry with you), while containing useful, accessible information on every aspect of documentary filmmaking, all with a doggedly hands-on attitude. ★★★★★



● ROMAN POLANSKI

James Morrison, University Of Illinois Press, RRP £10.99

Potanski's dramatic life has never been short of people willing to document it, some with dubious intent. But Morrison keeps things tasteful when drawing parallels in the director's work and private life. Don't be fooled by its slim size, though — this is a dense read all the way. ★★★★★



● CLARK GABLE: TORMENTED STAR

David Bret, JR Books, RRP £17.99

Another touch of salaciousness from Bret (he's already done Freddie Mercury and George Formby) which causes a stir in an early chapter when it claims that the young Gable was 'gay for pay' and a ruthless career climber. The rest, however, is familiar, with no discernably new interviews. ★★★



● ADMIT ONE: A JOURNEY INTO FILM

Emmett James, Cultural Communications, RRP TBC

After a spectacularly snobbish intro (some of us like Under Siege, Mr. James), this eventually manages to claw its way beyond "Who gives a shit what you think?" territory to tell a couple of good anecdotes about accidentally ending up in porn and crashing the Academy Awards. Skip to the end... ★★★



● JUDY GARLAND

Paul Donnelley, Haus Publishing, RRP £20

Garland's tale of woe and personal tragedy leaves her friend Marilyn Monroe's in the dust. You get the sense that this account is accurate, but there's clearly so much more waiting to be told that it feels incomplete, like crib notes to a larger, more painful, more fascinating story. ★★★



● JIM JARMUSCH

Juan A. Suarez, University Of Illinois Press, RRP £10.99

An in-depth, academic study of the New York hipster's output, analysing his influences (everything from the beat poets to hip-hop) and milieu. Highbrow stuff to be sure, but it's good to see a thorough investigation of someone generally just admired for his minimal cool. ★★★★★



TEN BAD DATES WITH DE NIRO

Back off, Schott: there's a new list-man in town



Richard T. Kelly, Faber & Faber, £12.99

● IF ANYTHING'S LIKELY TO GIVE OUR TOP TEN LIST editor a nervous breakdown, it's this wonderful book of private passions and guilty pleasures. Richard T. Kelly's compilation covers everything from screen drunks (Richard E. Grant's Withnail vs. Jimmy Stewart in Harvey vs. Leaving Las Vegas' Nicolas Cage) to worst wigs, with contributions from journalists, agents and commissioners — not to

mention the Coen brothers talking about dream remakes, and playwright David Hare writing excellently about films that defy genre.

Many of the list-compilers assembled here choose to write personal accounts rather than objective constructions. While this makes for an authentic debate, it can be frustrating. Do we really care which films upset journalist Anne Bilson in her youth? On the other hand, it has its advantages: Demetrios Matheou's titular list is particularly inspired, as is author D. B. C. Pierre's list of films "Not To Watch On Medication (Or In Reach Of A Cutlery Drawer)." Mike Figgis sneakily puts Weekend at number eight in his list of the Ten Greatest Ever Films simply because it's his favourite, while Steven Soderbergh cheats by scrapping the idea of a top ten altogether and writing solely about Chinatown. Top Ten Best Uses Of Nail Varnish, however, could be considered unnecessarily thorough.

While the content might be great, the layout is awful. The lack of an index can mean a time-consuming raffle through nightmarishly oblique contents pages, and the thesis-like design is exacerbated by the scarcity of Andrew Rae's excellent illustrations, set apart on a page of their own like medical diagrams and advertising other parts of the book. That aside, as long as you stock up on page-markers, this is a terrific accompaniment to any film fan's library. Don't go to the pub without it.

★★★★★ KAT BROWN



THE RUINS

Scott Smith, Corgi Adult, RRP £5.99

● SCOTT SMITH PROVED HIMSELF A MASTER OF ADAPTING HIS OWN WORK WHEN he took his debut novel, A Simple Plan, reworked the plot and produced the superior script for the 1998 Sam