



Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction Cinema (Historical Dictionaries of Literature and the Arts)

By Keith M. Booker

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The history of science fiction film now spans more than 100 years, during which time more than 1,000 science fiction films of various kinds have been made. Beginning with the work of pioneering French filmmaker Georges Méliès at the dawn of the 20th century and moving through such silent films as Fritz Lang's classic *Metropolis*, science fiction film has had a long and eventful history that has taken it in many directions but that has moved the genre inexorably forward into a prominent place at the center of the film industry in the works of big-budget hitmakers like George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, and Michael Bay.

The *Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction Cinema* provides broad coverage of the people, films, companies, techniques, themes, and subgenres that have made science fiction cinema such a vital part of world cinema. This is done through a chronology, an introductory essay, a bibliography, and over 300 cross-referenced dictionary entries. This volume is designed to be accessible and enlightening to fans of the genre who simply want to know more about the films they so enjoy.

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Editorial Review

Review

In this easy-to-read and informative reference, Booker (English, Univ. of Arkansas; Science Fiction Television) covers sf movies from their beginnings to the present. Varying in length from one-quarter of a page to three pages, the 300-plus alphabetically arranged articles discuss directors, producers, writers, actors, subgenres, styles, and production companies....This could be a helpful place to begin research on sf movies....It is likely to be of most interest to academic researchers but may also be useful to curious public library patrons. (*Library Journal*)

It fills a niche available for a selective dictionary with a historical, contextual approach and an international scope....In addition to its 300-plus entries, this work provides a chronology of major films and trends, an insightful introductory essay, and an extensive bibliography arranged by topic. It will be useful for academic or public library collections seeking thorough coverage of science fiction or film, or for those lacking other reference works on the genre. Summing Up: Recommended. (*CHOICE*)

Science-fiction cinema began more than 100 years ago and has provided several milestones: color film, blending of live-action and animation, and a host of special effects. In this volume, English professor Booker surveys the genre. The focus is largely American, but Booker also notes contributions by the UK, Japan, South Korea, Germany, France, and Italy (omitting others, such as Hong Kong). Booker's lengthy chronology (almost 20 pages) begins with Mary Shelley's 1818 *Frankenstein* but lists mainly twentieth-century seminal and representative films and inspirations. An introduction traces sciencefiction film history from the silent era. A–Z entries cover films; persons (actors, directors, producers, writers, special-effects artists); characters; concepts; and techniques. Length ranges from a half page to 4 pages (mainly for concepts, such as Postapocalyptic). In most cases, film entries list the year and director, describe the plot, and comment on the film's impact....An extensive bibliography rounds out the volume. This volume should find a home in film-studies collections as well as in libraries serving science-fiction fans. (*Booklist*)

As a resource, this Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction Cinema should prove of great value to students, new scholars in the field, and science fiction experts alike.... I will certainly recommend that my library purchase a copy. (*Science Fiction Studies*)

The work's contents cover activity and productions that have appeared up to and including 2009. The author's written style is also both informative and extremely readable and, while most entries are brief, the information is concise and precisely presented. ... Overall, this handy book is a rich resource for anyone studying or seeking to commence an exploration of the history and practice of the science fiction movie genre. It is perfectly accessible to a broad readership audience and; despite the slightly high academic price tag, many scholastic and public collections would be enhanced through the acquisition of this work. (*Reference Reviews*)

Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Mary Shelley are three writers that are the inspiration for a multi-million dollar film industry that continues to push the envelope on how filmmakers can translate the human imagination onto film. Booker delivers a concise chronology and introduction of the evolution of science fiction cinema beginning with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, often labeled as the first science fiction novel. Directors, actors, and films are listed in 300 entries alongside monsters, aliens, and other terms. Most entries provide descriptive or biographical information rather than critical commentary, although key terms such as

feminism and gender do explore the topics in further detail. All the terms are cross-referenced and a lengthy bibliography is included. (*American Reference Books Annual*)

This it is a . . . concise encyclopedia in which the sub-chapters on the individual subjects work well and add [a] fresh insight to the science fiction film. (*Filmwerk*)

About the Author

M. Keith Booker is the James E. and Ellen Wadley Roper Professor of English at the University of Arkansas.

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Mitchell Wilder:

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