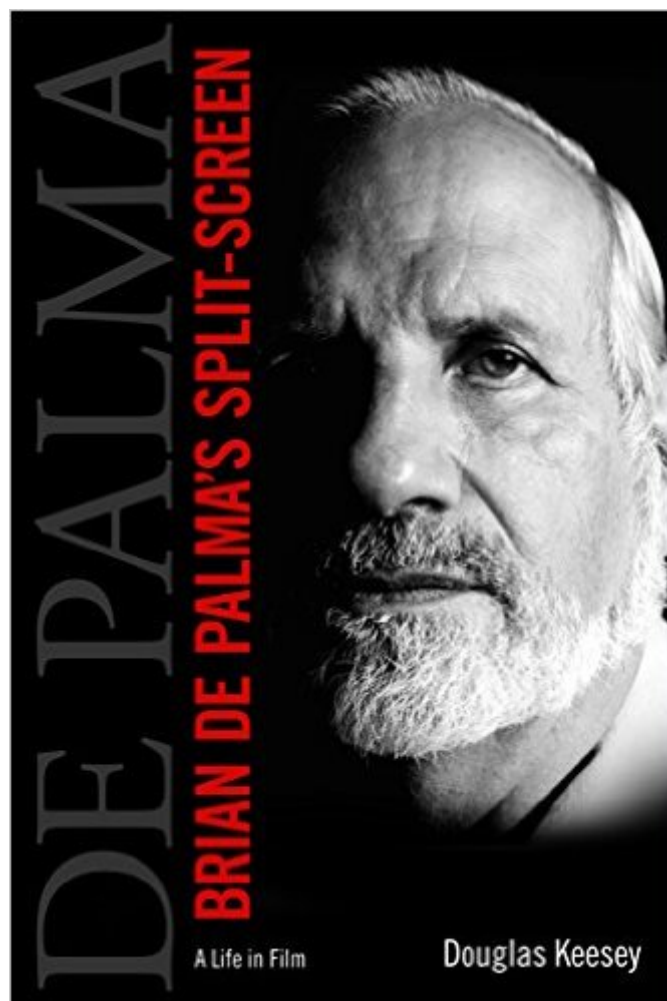


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Brian De Palma's Split-Screen: A Life In Film



Synopsis

Over the last five decades, the films of director Brian De Palma (b. 1940) have been among the biggest successes (The Untouchables, Mission: Impossible) and the most high-profile failures (The Bonfire of the Vanities) in Hollywood history. De Palma helped launch the careers of such prominent actors as Robert De Niro, John Travolta, and Sissy Spacek (who was nominated for an Academy Award as Best Actress in Carrie). Indeed Quentin Tarantino named Blow Out as one of his top three favorite films, praising De Palma as the best living American director. Picketed by feminists protesting its depictions of violence against women, Dressed to Kill helped to create the erotic thriller genre. Scarface, with its over-the-top performance by Al Pacino, remains a cult favorite. In the twenty-first century, De Palma has continued to experiment, incorporating elements from videogames (Femme Fatale), tabloid journalism (The Black Dahlia), YouTube, and Skype (Redacted and Passion) into his latest works. What makes De Palma such a maverick even when he is making Hollywood genre films? Why do his movies often feature megalomaniacs and failed heroes? Is he merely a misogynist and an imitator of Alfred Hitchcock? To answer these questions, author Douglas Keesey takes a biographical approach to De Palma's cinema, showing how De Palma reworks events from his own life into his films. Written in an accessible style, and including a chapter on every one of his films to date, this book is for anyone who wants to know more about De Palma's controversial films or who wants to better understand the man who made them.

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Customer Reviews

This intriguing book devotes a chapter to each of De Palma's films. Each chapter does a splendid

job of contextualizing that film in cinematic history, De Palma's personal life and the current events of the time. For a fan of his films this book offers many insights and draws many conclusions which, whether one agrees or not, gives the reader a new perspective on each film. It has motivated me to return to some of these works and watch with a new eye. For film history buffs the issues and controversies surrounding each film (and De Palma in general) are addressed. To what degree did he copy or mimic his influences (Hitchcock and Godard primarily)? Ultimately what this book does is present Brian De Palma as a "personal filmmaker" in that he seems to use his work to work through, or at least analyze, his own life's experiences. To this end I believe the work is a success, though I am hesitant to accept every possible connection the author makes. Reviewed from an ARC made available by the publisher via NetGalley.

A truly awful chapter on Mission Impossible. I did not read any other chapters. The author managed to miss most of the internal references and complexities that Towne wove into the script. It should be analysed from Towne's writing, not from De Palma's weak directing of the film.

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