



Detecting Men: Masculinity And the Hollywood Detective Film (Sunny Series, Cultural Studies in Cinema/Video)

Philippa Gates

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Looks at how detective films have reflected and shaped our ideas about masculinity, heroism, law and order, and national identity.

Detecting Men examines the history of the Hollywood detective genre and the ways that detective films have negotiated changing social attitudes toward masculinity, heroism, law enforcement, and justice. Genre film can be a site for the expression and resolution of problematic social issues, but while there have been many studies of such other male genres as war films, gangster films, and Westerns, relatively little attention has been paid to detective films beyond *film noir*. In this volume, Philippa Gates examines classical films of the thirties and forties as well as recent examples of the genre, including *Die Hard*, the *Lethal Weapon* films, *The Usual Suspects*, *Seven*, *Devil in a Blue Dress*, and *Murder by Numbers*, in order to explore social anxieties about masculinity and crime and Hollywood's conceptions of gender. Up until the early 1990s, Gates argues, the primary focus of the detective genre was the masculinity of the hero. However, from the mid-1990s onward, the genre has shifted to more technical portrayals of crime scene investigation, forensic science, and criminal profiling, offering a reassuring image of law enforcement in the face of violent crime. By investigating the evolution of the detective film, Gates suggests, perhaps we can detect the male.

“There have been many books on detectives on film, but few have approached the genre in as broad a theoretical and historical sweep. Beginning with William Powell and Humphrey Bogart, and ending with villainy (Hannibal Lecter and Keyser Soze) and criminalists (Gil Grissom), Gates grounds her remarks in genre and gender theory, and ably demonstrates how in ‘moments of time’ American film and television detectives have reflected our changing views of heroism and masculinity.” — *Journal of the American Studies Association of Texas*

“Gates cites trends through the decades: how the tenor of an era produced matching screen treatments, how the financial success of one work spawned more titles within a particular genre.” — *CHOICE*

“This topic is timely and in many ways overdue. This is the first book to really put all the pieces together, and in the process of constructing this historical overview, Gates discovers profound connections and shifts that others have missed.” — Peter Lehman, author of *Roy Orbison: The Invention of an Alternative Rock Masculinity*

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