



Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters: A Hollywood History (Contemporary Approaches to Film and Media Series)

Sheldon Hall, Steve Neale

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The pantheon of big-budget, commercially successful films encompasses a range of genres, including biblical films, war films, romances, comic-book adaptations, animated features, and historical epics. In *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters: A Hollywood History* authors Sheldon Hall and Steve Neale discuss the characteristics, history, and modes of distribution and exhibition that unite big-budget pictures, from their beginnings in the late nineteenth century to the present. Moving chronologically, the authors examine the roots of today's blockbuster in the "feature," "special," "superspecial," "roadshow," "epic," and "spectacle" of earlier eras, with special attention to the characteristics of each type of picture.

In the first section, Hall and Neale consider the beginnings of features, specials, and superspecials in American cinema, as the terms came to define not the length of a film but its marketable stars or larger budget. The second section investigates roadshowing as a means of distributing specials and the changes to the roadshow that resulted from the introduction of synchronized sound in the 1920s. In the third section, the authors examine the phenomenon of epics and spectacles that arose from films like *Gone with the Wind*, *Samson and Delilah*, and *Spartacus* and continues to evolve today in films like *Spider-Man* and *Pearl Harbor*. In this section, Hall and Neale consider advances in visual and sound technology and the effects and costs they introduced to the industry.

Scholars of film and television studies as well as readers interested in the history of American moviemaking will enjoy *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters*.

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