



The Epic in Film: From Myth to Blockbuster

Constantine Santas

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Constantine Santas encourages us to wonder why film critics have so routinely dismissed the epic film. In *The Epic in Film*, he argues that 'blockbuster' and 'artistic' are not mutually exclusive terms, and, perhaps more importantly, epic film is an inherently profound genre in its ability to tap into a nation's, and sometimes humanity's, dreams and fears. Why do we see dozens and dozens of films based on the King Arthur legend? Why would a presidential-hopeful borrow a phrase, 'Read my lips,' from Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry*? Why do war epics proliferate in times of war or national crisis? Why are epics as a whole the most popular movie genre? Start with an individual quest of some kind undertaken by an attractive hero or heroine, add the weight of a nation, and perhaps humanity, into that character's struggle, sprinkle some awe-inspiring special effects and a general sense of largesse, and don't forget the happy ending; and there you have a recipe for a film that can contain the deepest emotions—fear, hope, insecurity, pride—of a nation, and, sometimes, a world. Whether you love *Gone with the Wind* and hate *Troy*; find Akira Kurosawa's films brilliant; or marvel over the depth of the *Matrix* trilogy, film buffs will want to read this first book-length treatment of the epic, a wildly popular, infinitely fascinating, and critically underappreciated genre.

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