
’80s Action Movies on the Cheap: 284 Low Budget, High Impact Pictures is a work that sets out to examine the evolution of action movies from their cheesy low-budget origins and how they influenced the development of the action film genre. The author states that his interest in exploring the topic stems from his belief that the 1980s was the birth of the modern-day action film. There are 284 entries arranged chronologically that examine the films’ plots and their influencers. The entries have an informal tone, but they are well researched and use examples from other film genres to make connections. The book is intended for use by a variety of researchers, but its tone and content make it most suitable for use as an introduction to 1980s action and adventure films for action movie lovers or film students.

This volume covers a lot of information in a relatively small amount of space. This is both a strength and weakness of the work because while it makes it more comprehensive, it also makes the entries less detailed and limits discussion. The author occasionally shines when he makes the connections promised in the introduction, such as in the entry for “Hammer aka Hammerhead.” He discusses the film’s plot and actors, but more importantly emphasizes what the director was attempting to achieve and how he succeeded and failed. This is the kind of entry that elevates the topic and work to being a research resource. However, this entry is not in the majority. Many of the film entries read as plot summaries and reviews and neglect to explain the film’s importance to the genre and how it contributed to the genre’s growth.

If one rated and reviewed this volume based on its own stated goal, it would not be considered a success. Although it occasionally found ways to link the discussed films with their modern counterparts, it too often strayed in scope and away from its original mission. Where it does succeed is in being a reference guide to obscure 1980s action and adventure films. The reviews are fun, honest, and provide detailed and exciting descriptions of the movies. Because this is an inexpensive volume and the topic is not covered heavily, I would recommend it for public libraries and community colleges with appropriate disciplines. —Marissa Ellermann, Head of Circulation Services Librarian, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Carbondale, Illinois

Sources

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Anita J. Slack, Editor

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