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Juan A. Suarez


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Juan A. Suarez : Jim Jarmusch (Contemporary Film Directors) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jim Jarmusch (Contemporary Film Directors):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Decent survey of Jarmusch's work up to 2005, but a slim book and one that occasionally segues into postmodernist chic By Christopher Culver In spite of Jim Jarmusch's status as one of America's great independent filmmakers, there aren't many books out there on his body of work. This survey by Juan A. Suarez came out in 2007 and traces Jarmusch's career from the very beginning to his 2005 film *BROKEN FLOWERS*. The opening chapter describes Jarmusch's coming of age in New York City in the 1970s in a lively arts community that included not just film but also punk and new wave music, street art, and experimental theatre. From

there, the book does on to describe each of Jarmusch's films up to 2005, and even treats his 1997 Neil Young tour documentary as of equal importance to any of his feature films. Suarez is an astute commentator on Jarmusch's aesthetic. His claims of how Jarmusch sees things might even be said to have "predictive power", as one aspect Suarez points to would become the very center of Jarmusch's 2013 film *ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE*. The book drew my attention to many moments on screen that will enrich future viewing experiences, and Suarez helps orientate Jarmusch fans among the vast canon of film and literature which Jarmusch has shamelessly drawn on in making films. Especially interesting are Suarez's comments on how *DEAD MAN* (much more than just the opening quotation) was inspired by the poet Henri Michaux. The book is filled out with Tod Lippy's interview of Jarmusch, which was originally published in the journal *Protections* in 2000. Jarmusch's own comments on his work are a pleasure to read, as they are pervaded with a sense of humility and boundless curiosity for all the wonderful films, books, and music are out there. In spite of being published by a university press, this book will prove accessible to any cinephile who wants to better appreciate Jarmusch's films and their cultural context. However, a downside of the book is how at certain moments, Suarez segues from an straightforward writing style into a tiresome parroting of postmodernist thought. For example: "Yet homogeneous space is never absolute. It superimposes itself on what Lefebvre calls 'urban culture', where 'urban' designates the city as a heterogeneous fabric of relations and conjunctions, an aggregate of absolute singularities that cannot be totally linearized and integrated into the networks of capital and exchange." "The author is, to revert to Ferdinand de Saussure's terms, a form of parole in the language of history, a particular performance of the available cultural archive. In this respect, Jarmusch's texts will not be read as completely autonomous performances (that is, the emanation of a free-floating imagination) nor as passive reflections of the times but as selective actualizations of historically situated possibilities. For what it's worth, I am a linguist and very familiar with the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, such as his langue/parole distinction, so I am not afraid of these concepts. However, these bits are so incongruous with the rest of the text that the reader feels Suarez was forced to include them for the sake of street cred among his fellow academics or to please the publisher's anonymous reviewers. I have a few other complaints as well. Suarez doesn't mention the close relationship between Jarmusch and the Finnish auteur Aki Kaurismäki in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a friendship that had an impact on the films of each, and is a good example of how Jarmusch's distinctly American focus proved remarkably accessible outside the country as well. And the book feels kind of lightweight, this reader would have liked more information about the shooting and editing stages for each film, not just what ultimately showed up on screens. So, don't expect from this a treatment of Jim Jarmusch's life and work that is as ample as, say, Richard Brody's biography of Jean-Luc Godard. Jarmusch still awaits such. But for fans of the filmmaker, this is worthwhile.

The first major English-language study of Jarmusch At a time when gimmicky, action-driven blockbusters ruled Hollywood, Jim Jarmusch spearheaded a boom in independent cinema by making low-budget films focused on intimacy, character, and new takes on classical narratives. His minimal form, peculiar pacing, wry humor, and blank affect have since been adopted by directors including Sophia Coppola, Hal Harley, Richard Linklater, and Wong Kar-Wai. Juan A. Suarez's *Jim Jarmusch* analyzes the director's work from three mutually implicated perspectives: in relation to independent filmmaking from the 1980s to the present; as a form of cultural production that appropriates existing icons, genres, and motifs; and as an instance of postmodern politics. A volume in the series *Contemporary Film Directors*, edited by James R. Naremore

"This insightful and lively book is wonderfully freighted with information and ideas. The Jarmusch fan will find that the films are covered in appropriate depth and detail, while those interested in the place of current film within broader cultural developments will find much valuable and informative reading." --R. Barton Palmer, author of *Joel and Ethan Coen*