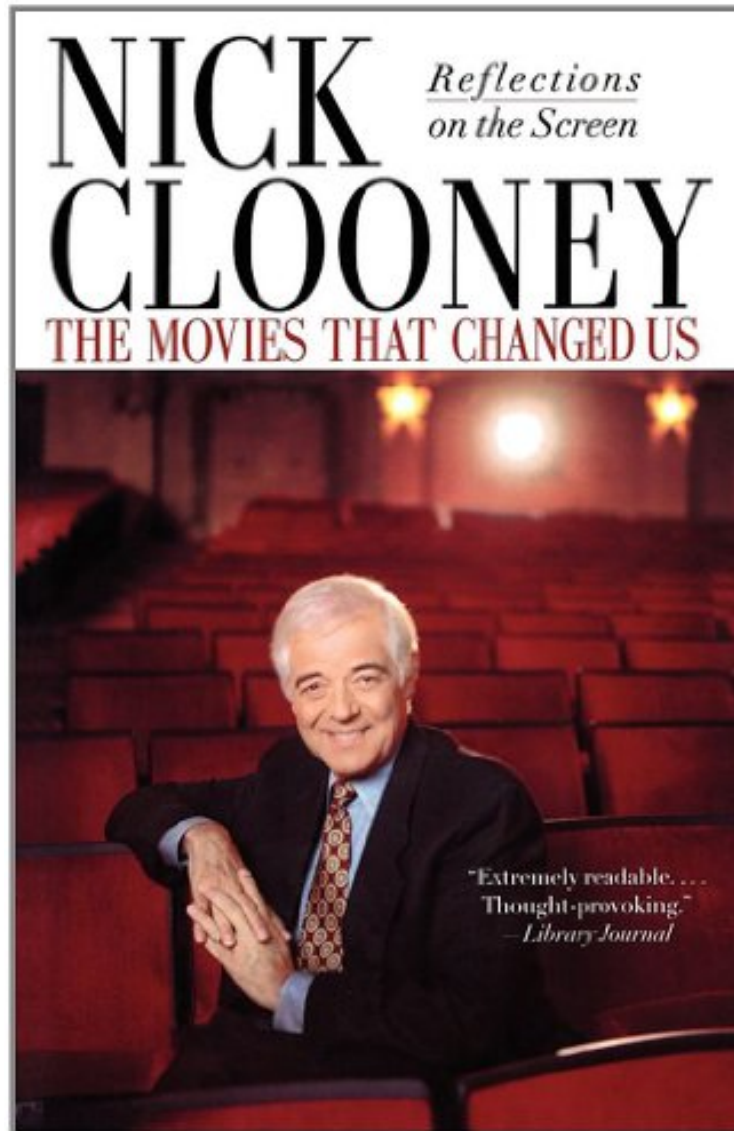


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The Movies That Changed Us: Reflections on the Screen

Nick Clooney

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written very well. I didn't know Nick Clooney was so bright. He is an excellent writer. This book is great reading.

Nick Clooney, one of America's most respected film critics and historians, presents a distinctive catalog of movies that have influenced and altered not only the world of cinema, but also the world in which we live. Since the advent of moving pictures, there have been films that exist as more than just entertainment. These rare movies have touched the collective soul of the public with such passion and artistic skill that they have actually changed the way we view life, history, and ourselves. Some have transformed the way movies are made and viewed -- and some have actually transformed us. In *The Movies That Changed Us*, Clooney explores, explains, and theorizes upon twenty films -- reaching from 1998 back to 1915 -- that forever shifted our perceptions about race, religion, sex, politics, and the very definition of humanity. From the ambitiously epic -- though manifestly racist -- *Birth of a Nation*, to the controversial violence of *Taxi Driver*, to the mythic idealism and visual cornucopia of *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Star Wars*, Clooney relates the stories behind the camera in an informative, engaging, and personal chronicle of cinema and society.

From Publishers Weekly Few things in Hollywood get the movie-going public more riled up than lists. The American Film Institute's ranking of the 100 greatest flicks, for instance, touched off a firestorm of protest when it was released. Now film historian and former American Movie Channel host Clooney joins the fray, with his roundup of 20 movies that changed American culture. They're not necessarily the best ones, he says, but they all sparked something in the country's social or political consciousness. On the list are some gimmes (*Dr. Strangelove*; *The Graduate*), some correct but unsavory picks (Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*) and some surprising exclusions (*Saving Private Ryan* gets in, but *Apocalypse Now* doesn't-come again?). With each selection, Clooney offers a brief plot summary, and then demonstrates how the movie altered America-or at the very least, Hollywood. *Taxi Driver*, for instance, inspired John Hinckley, Jr.'s assassination attempt, while *Star Wars* "changed the way we make movies." Clooney's arguments are convincing enough, but many of the entries share a lame coda: that the movie "changed things." It's particularly heartening to see him resuscitate old gems, though; films from the '30s (e.g., *Boys Town* and *Morocco*) take up a full quarter of the list. "The story of film is far from over," Clooney notes, as if the noted movie buff can't wait to pen a sequel. Readers might quibble with his list, but then, that's half the fun. Agent, Joanna Pulcini. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal In this extremely readable work, Clooney, former host of the cable channel American Movie Classics, examines one German and 19 U.S. films that "changed us," with content that was either on top or ahead of the curve. Thus, a great film like *Citizen Kane* does not make the cut, as it did not change society, but *Boy's Town*, *The Birth of a Nation*, and *Taxi Driver* do. Each of Clooney's short essays underscores why one particular film profoundly affected the viewing audience, for better or worse, whereas thousands of other merely "entertained." Some readers may question whether a film was really so influential, but Clooney is thought-provoking, and his occasional interviews with the original film personnel are alone worth the price. An interesting accompaniment to more scholarly studies of audience reaction, including *Passionate Views*, edited by Carl Plantigna and Greg M. Smith, and Janet Staiger's *Perverse Spectators*, this is highly recommended for all cultural studies collections. Anthony J. Adam, Prairie View AM Univ., TX Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist American Movie Classics pitchman Clooney's stab at determining which movies had influence beyond their entertainment value is full of idiosyncratic pronouncements, such as "following *Dr. Strangelove*, the lines of national debate were skewed perceptibly" and, of *The Graduate*, that it "did not kill romantic movies. But it did change things." Whether his remarks strike a chord or not, the book is a nice vehicle for revisiting some famous films and the world that first liked them. Clooney earns extra points for discussing a few silent films (*Birth of a Nation*, *The Big Parade*) and for inadvertently reminding readers of how maudlin timely hits like *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *Marty* are. Mike Tribby Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved