



Escape Artist: The Life and Films of John Sturges (Wisconsin Studies in Film)

Glenn Lovell

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Escape Artist—based on Glenn Lovell’s extensive interviews with John Sturges, his wife and children, and numerous stars including Clint Eastwood, Robert Duvall, and Jane Russell—is the first biography of the director of such acclaimed films as *The Magnificent Seven*, *The Great Escape*, and *Bad Day at Black Rock*. Lovell examines Sturges’s childhood in California during the Great Depression; his apprenticeship in the editing department of RKO Pictures, where he worked on such films as *Gunga Din* and *Of Human Bondage*; his service in the Army Air Corps in World War II; and his emergence as one of the first independent producer-directors in Hollywood.

Chronicling the filmmaker’s relationships with such luminaries as Spencer Tracy, James Garner, Yul Brynner, and Frank Sinatra, *Escape Artist* interweaves biography with critical analyses of Sturges’s hits and misses. Along the way, Lovell addresses the reasons why Sturges has been overlooked in the ongoing discussion of postwar Hollywood and explores the director’s focus on masculinity, machismo, and male-bonding in big-budget, ensemble action films. Lovell also examines Sturges’s aesthetic sensibility, his talent for composing widescreen images, and his uncanny ability to judge raw talent—including that of Steve McQueen, Charles Bronson, and James Coburn, all of whom began their careers in Sturges’s movies.

This long overdue study of a major Hollywood director will find a welcome home in the libraries of film scholars, action movie buffs, and anyone interested in the popular culture of the twentieth century.

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"Pick up a copy of film critic and scholar Glenn Lovell's terrific new Sturges biography, *Escape Artist*. . . . I can't urge you enough to check out this interview-rich, aesthetically and culturally perceptive look at the filmmaker and his work."—Bob Strauss, Los Angeles Daily News

“Lovell’s list of interviewees reads like a who’s who of Hollywood and they obviously provided rich source material for this full-scale biography and career survey.”— Leonard Maltin

“This long overdue study of a major Hollywood director will find a welcome home in the libraries of film scholars, action movie buffs, and anyone interested in the popular culture of the twentieth century.”—Turner Classic Movies (TCM.com)

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