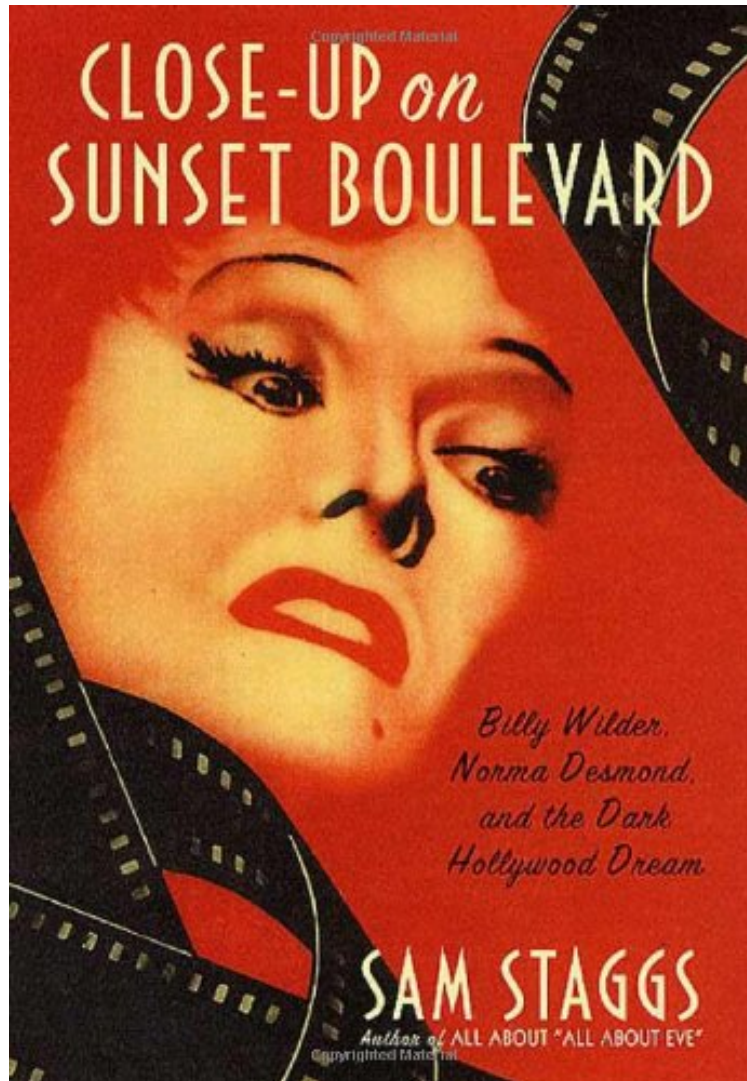


(Free read ebook) Close-up on Sunset Boulevard: Billy Wilder, Norma Desmond, and the Dark Hollywood Dream

Close-up on Sunset Boulevard: Billy Wilder, Norma Desmond, and the Dark Hollywood Dream

Sam Staggs

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Sam Staggs : Close-up on Sunset Boulevard: Billy Wilder, Norma Desmond, and the Dark Hollywood Dream before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Close-up on Sunset Boulevard: Billy Wilder, Norma Desmond, and the Dark Hollywood Dream:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I am still telling Sam Staggs tales to all my friendsBy ByrdManAs this is a film which I watch over over again, as it is so rich iconic to say the least, Mr Staggs has written the

quintessential companion to the brilliant Mr. Wilder's film. It opened up new depths of understanding, especially its inclusion of the musical, "APPLAUSE", of which I had little knowledge, even tho' as a poster artist I had done a poster for the City Center Encores version in 2008 or so. And Celeste Holmes' obsessive hatred of Bette is equal to Bette's obsessive hatred of Joan Crawford. Get over it girls! I could not put this book down and it led me to Mr. Staggs other wonderful chronicle of "All About All About Eve", which I ripped thru' with gripping delight! David Edward Byrd
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Sunset Boulevard
By J. Woodrum
Read this and then watch the movie, and you are in for a treat. This is one of my all time favorites and the book is great background. I have other Sam Staggs books and they are all very interesting.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Loved the movie
By Going Back to Cali
Loved the movie. The book is solid, however, I cared nothing for the musical. If there is one change that I'd make to this book, it would be to remove all of the later chapters on the musical. If the author focused solely on the 1950 film and nothing more, it would have been perfect.

Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*, a classic film noir and also a damning dissection of the Hollywood dream factory, evokes the glamour and ruin of the stars who subsist on that dream. It's also one long in-joke about the movie industry and those who made it great—and who were, in turn, destroyed by it. One of the most critically admired films of the twentieth century, *Sunset Boulevard* is also famous as silent star Gloria Swanson's comeback picture. *Close-Up On Sunset Boulevard* tells the story of this extravagant work, from the writing, casting and filming to the disastrous previews that made Paramount consider shelving it. It's about the writing team of Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett—sardonically called "the happiest couple in Hollywood"—and their raucous professional relationship. It's about the art direction and the sets, the costumes, the props, the lights and the cameras, and the personalities who used those tools to create a cinematic work of art. Staggs goes behind the scenes to reveal: William Holden, endlessly attacked by his bitter wife and already drinking too much; Nancy Olson, the cheerful ingenue who had never heard of the great Gloria Swanson; the dark genius Erich von Stroheim; the once famous but long-forgotten "Waxworks"; and of course Swanson herself, who—just like Norma Desmond—had once been "the greatest star of them all." But the story of *Sunset Boulevard* doesn't end with the movie's success and acclaim at its release in 1950. There's much more, and Staggs layers this stylish book with fascinating detail, following the actors and Wilder into their post-*Sunset* careers and revealing Gloria Swanson's never-ending struggle to free herself from the clutches of Norma Desmond. *Close-Up On Sunset Boulevard* also chronicles the making of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical production of *Sunset Boulevard* and the explosive diva controversies that dogged it. The book ends with a shocking example of Hollywood life imitating Hollywood art. By the last page of this rich narrative, readers will conclude: We are those "wonderful people out there in the dark."

From Publishers Weekly
Staggs serves up another round of popcorn in this highly enjoyable follow-up to *All About "All About Eve,"* plumbing the depths of the noir homage to the silent era, *Sunset Boulevard*. The book traces the film's history from the studio pairing of Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett as screenwriters to the Academy Award disappointments to the film's rebirth as an Andrew Lloyd Webber musical in the 1990s. Staggs's research is impressive: in addition to traditional print sources, he tapped unexpected sources, such as the film's previously un-interviewed supporting actress Nancy Olson, and explored nifty locales, like Norma Desmond's would-be neighborhood. The intrepid reporting results in little-known film facts: how co-art director John Meehan conceived and set up the face-down water shot of the dead Joe Gillis (William Holden) and why then-megastar Montgomery Clift did not want to play opposite older female character Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson). Also entertaining are Staggs's descriptions of the many behind-the-scenes cat fights. Some of Staggs's film analysis such as his take on the "crowd-pleasing kitsch" sound movies of Cecil B. DeMille is standard, but his opinions on the Wilder-Brackett and Wilder-I.A.L. Diamond pairings are sharp and original. There are also plenty of edifying sidebars on topics such as the history of Norma Desmond's exotic car (the Isotta-Fraschini), changes made to the script and "Smiling Franklyn Farnum," the silent western star who plays Norma Desmond's pet undertaker. Staggs has succeeded in presenting another remarkable film study. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.
From Library Journal
From the author of *All About All About Eve* comes another intense look at a film classic. Written in a campy, opinionated style, this is everything you ever wanted to know about *Sunset Boulevard* and some things you might not. It includes a history of the Billy Wilder-Charles Brackett screenwriting partnership, actual Hollywood locations where the film was shot, intimate details about the stars, and even a history of Gloria Swanson's Isotta Fraschini, the ultimate star car. Nothing about this film seems to have escaped the author. He even can't resist pitting the actresses who played Norma Desmond in the musical version against each other to determine who was the ultimate "Singing Norma." This is no doubt a fun read, and Staggs knows his material; it is just difficult to believe that many patrons out there have the same passion for this film that he does. For comprehensive film collections. Rosellen Brewer, Monterey Cty. Free Libs., Salinas, CA
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From Booklist
Staggs turns from telling *All about 'All about Eve'* (2000) to Wilder's classic about the seamy side of Hollywood. Unfortunately, he gives short shrift to the actual production, the account of which is based largely on the reminiscences of sole surviving principal

cast member Nancy Olson, in favor of background about the film's genesis and casting (Mae West was the original choice to play silent-film has-been Norma Desmond) and gossip about its stars. Space that might have been devoted to the film is largely squandered on its cinematic descendents, including *A Star Is Born* and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*; its life on stage (the 1993 musical and a later drag musical); and such spinoffs as the gay porn film *Sunset Boulevard*. Staggs' catty approach, which suited a piece of elevated trash like *Eve* beautifully, is less appropriate here, for *Sunset Boulevard* is a genuine work of art. Still, if the off-camera lowdown is what you want, here it is. Gordon Flagg

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