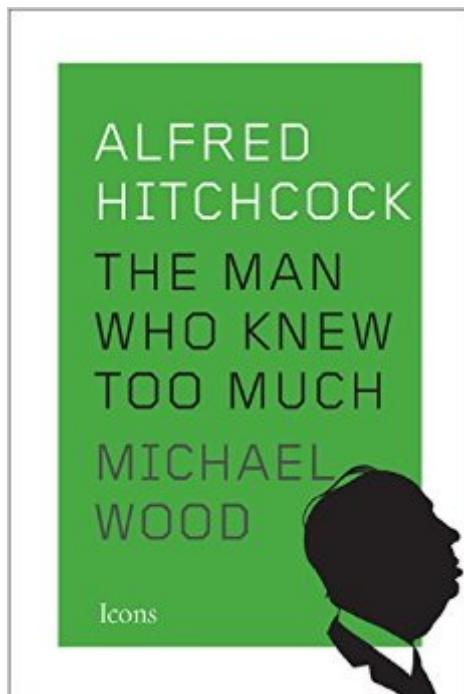


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Alfred Hitchcock: The Man Who Knew Too Much (Icons)



Synopsis

Widely regarded as the greatest filmmaker of the twentieth century, Alfred Hitchcock had a gift for creating suspense and a shrewd knowledge of human psychology. His film career, spanning more than half a century, is studded with classics from *The 39 Steps* to *Psycho*, *North by Northwest* to *Vertigo* (which in 2012 unseated *Citizen Kane* as the best movie of all time according to *Sight and Sound*). A master of intricate storytelling, Hitchcock was one of the first directors whose films belonged to both popular culture and high art. By the end of his life, he had gone from being the overweight son of a greengrocer in a London suburb to Hollywood's reigning director, whose cameo roles in his own films were one of their most anticipated features, and whose profile was recognized by millions (thanks to the television show *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*). Michael Wood describes this journey with the wit and erudition that are the trademarks of his work, showcasing his singular ability to detect hidden patterns within apparently disparate forms. Whether he is writing about Henry James or Hollywood in the 1920s, he is alert to the fundamental truth lurking behind the stated meaning. In Hitchcock, Wood has found his ideal subject: "an artist for whom explicit statement was anathema, who made conventional plot a hiding place rather than a source of revelation." A

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Customer Reviews

In *ALFRED HITCHCOCK: THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH*, Michael Woods has penned an

interesting short, 120+ pages, book on Hitchcock. Unlike some books on the great director that often explore his quirks to the extent that you almost hate to go see another of his movies, this one is less thorough, but more enjoyable. The main parts are included, but you don't get the psychoanalysis of the director that makes other publications on Hitchcock drag. I had fun playing the Hitchcock movies while reading about them, and Mr. Woods analysis helped me enjoy the movies more, and understand them better. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to get a better understanding of Hitchcock the man and the director.

Alfred Hitchcock(1899-1980) is the subject explored in this brief book by Dr. Michael Wood, British born professor emeritus at Princeton University. The book gives a brief account of Hitchcock's career while reviewing several of the director's best films. Reviews deal with such Hitchcock hits at the box office as: The Lodger, The Man Who Knew Too Much (both films); The Birds; Vertigo; I Confess, North by Northwest, Notorious and others. As a person who has read a vast amount on Hitchcock there was little information in this book which was new to me. However, the book many appeal best to readers who know little about the rotund director and wish to know more. The book includes a filmography and bibliography which prove helpful to those who want more insights into the tortured genius of Hitchcock.

This is a very slight volume which claims to cover all of Hitchcock's feature film output. With such a slender book, you may wonder what information it could possibly impart that would not be evident by simply trawling the director's page and those of his films on Wikipedia. For one, this is well-written in an almost conversational tone, and while a large amount of the book describes the films and the circumstances under which they were made, there is more value added. While the book does cover all the films, it does not do so in-depth. If you are expecting a chapter on Rear Window, Marnie or Topaz, you'll be disappointed. Those films in particular are brought into the discussion around other late Hitchcock films such as Vertigo, Psycho and Family Plot. But this seems like a good balance. If all the films had received equal coverage, this would;t be much more than printed Wikipedia articles. Skipping over certain sections of the filmography allows Wood to address, to some extent, the recently en vogue opinions of Hitchcock as an abusive philanderer and tormenter of his female stars, of the stories he told about himself which built his legend and the rest of the space freed up lets Wood demonstrate his critical thinking regarding the films. Add to this the selection of two or three scenes from chosen films to illustrate Hitchcock's style, obsessions and technical development, and this is a very good book. Coverage of the war years (usually glossed over) and tidbits like Vertigo

being withdrawn from circulation until 1983 tossed in mean there's not a wasted word in this book. It may not cover everything, but what it does cover it does well.

you have to love any good book about 'HITCH' as his friends called him. he was such a great director who surprisingly never won an Oscar for best director. his movies stand the test of time and you can watch SHADOW OF A DOUBT made in 1942 and its still one of my favorite movies. he was a real character, a peeping tom etc, but one of the best. enjoy reading it.

A good brief introduction to Hitchcock's life, but for an appreciation of Hitchcock as a filmmaker look elsewhere (Spoto's Art of Alfred Hitchcock -- note, not his bio! -- is an excellent place to start).

Interesting survey of Hitchcock's life through his films. Good for insights into aspects of his growth as a suspense director but light on some of the personal aspects. May be of value to a reader interested - as I was - in the films. But the writing left me unsatisfied.

Michael Wood obviously did a substantial amount of research before putting pen to paper. He explains in some detail his -- and others' -- views of Hitchcock's films. He gives the reader a good synopsis of each film and then goes on to explain some of the reasoning and symbolism inherent in many scenes. He doesn't just write about the well-known films but also includes insight into many of Hitchcock's earlier British productions. However, I found it somewhat disconcerting that the information is presented in a rather disjointed fashion. The author seems to jump around from one film to another for no apparent reason. I was also somewhat confused at times as to whether an opinion is the author's personal view or generally accepted knowledge of others. For example, he writes of the actor Claude Rains being thought of as French because he played a French character in Casablanca. He used the plural "we" in his statement. I believe most serious film buffs -- and anyone bothering to read a book about such a famous director -- know Claude Rains as being born and reared in England -- and even if someone did not know that, would not assume just because he played a French policeman that he would necessarily be French. Regardless, there is a lot of interesting information about Hitchcock's films here, and some information about the man himself. I have given this book three stars because I do think it is okay and worth reading. It just doesn't seem to be extraordinary.

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