

Welcome to...



**AN INTRODUCTION TO**



FILM NOIR

A GUIDE TO FILM  
NOIR GENRE  
by Roger Ebert



- 1. A French term meaning "black film," or film of the night, inspired by the Series Noir, a line of cheap paperbacks that translated hard-boiled American crime authors and found a popular audience in France.





- 2. A movie which at no time misleads you into thinking there is going to be a happy ending.



- 3. Locations that reek of the night, of shadows, of alleys, of the back doors of fancy places, of apartment buildings with a high turnover rate, of taxi drivers and bartenders who have seen it all.



- **4. Cigarettes.** Everybody in film noir is always smoking, as if to say, "On top of everything else, I've been assigned to get through three packs today." **The best smoking movie of all time is "Out of the Past,"** in which Robert Mitchum and Kirk Douglas smoke furiously at each other. At one point, Mitchum enters a room, Douglas extends a pack and says, "Cigarette?" and Mitchum, holding up his hand, says, "Smoking."





5. Women who  
would just as soon  
kill you as love you,  
and vice versa.

OUT OF THE PAST (JACQUES  
TOURNEUR, 1947)



- **6. For women: low necklines, floppy hats, mascara, lipstick, dressing rooms, boudoirs, calling the doorman by his first name, high heels, red dresses, elbow length gloves, mixing drinks, having gangsters as boyfriends, having soft spots for alcoholic private eyes, wanting a lot of someone else's women, sprawling dead on the floor with every limb meticulously arranged and every hair in place.**



- 7. **For men: fedoras**, suits and ties, shabby residential hotels with a neon sign blinking through the window, **buying yourself a drink out of the office bottle**, cars with running boards, all-night diners, protecting kids who shouldn't be playing with the big guys, being on first-name terms with homicide cops, knowing a lot of people whose descriptions end in "ies," such as bookies, newsies, junkies, alkys, jockeys and cabbies.



- 8. Movies either shot in black and white, or feeling like they were.





- 9. Relationships in which love is only the final flop card in the poker game of death.





- 10. The most American film genre, because no society could have created a world so filled with doom, fate, fear and betrayal, unless it were essentially naive and optimistic.



- BEFORE
- THE
- MOVIE



**TOMMARYBETH@VERIZON.NET**

- **I WILL PLACE  
THE SLIDES OF  
EACH CLASS ON  
OSHER'S  
WEBSITE AFTER  
EACH CLASS.**



# HOW TO ACCESS THE CLASS NOTES

- Click on the Osher Website (not the Registration site):
- <https://www.wm.edu/offices/auxiliary/osher/index.php>
- On the left side of the page, click “Course Information,” and then click on “Class Notes and Presentation.”
- When the next page comes up, click on my name next to the class notes you want.



THE MOVIES ARE...

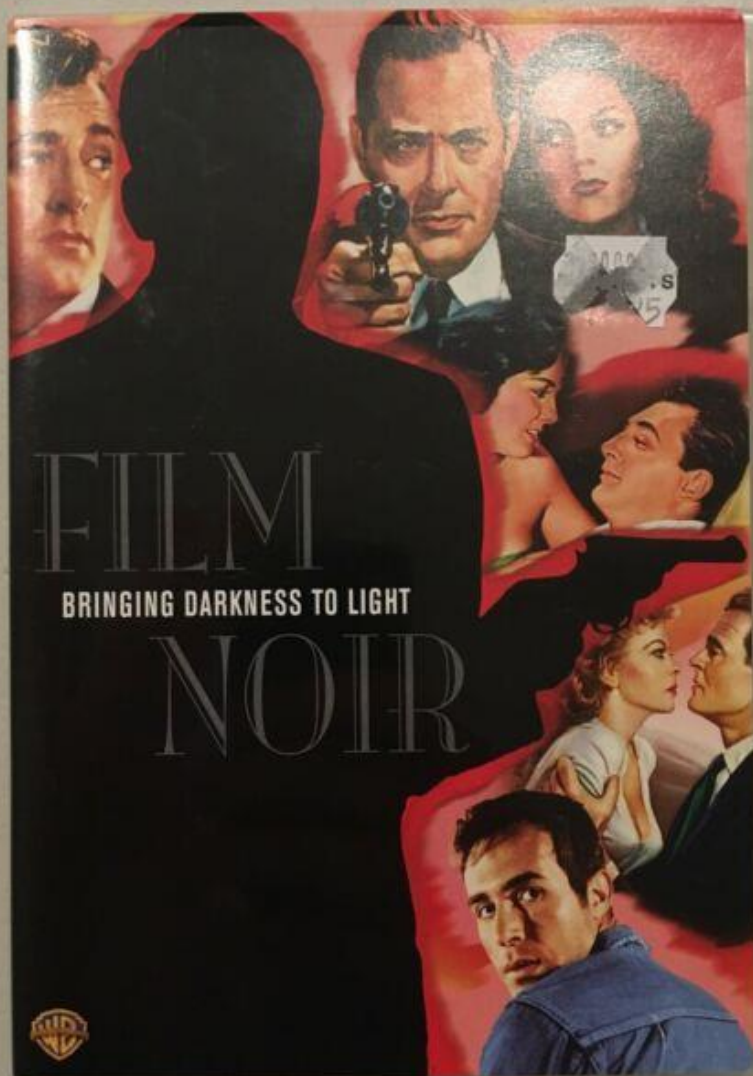






- *Film Noir: Bringing Darkness to Light* - 68 minutes - 2006
- *The Maltese Falcon* - 1 hr. & 40 minutes – 1941
- *Double Indemnity* – 1944 – 1 hr. & 50 minutes
- *Detour* - 1 hr. & 7 minutes - 1945
- *Gun Crazy* - 1 hr. & 26 minutes - 1950
- *Touch of Evil* - 95 minutes - 1958
-

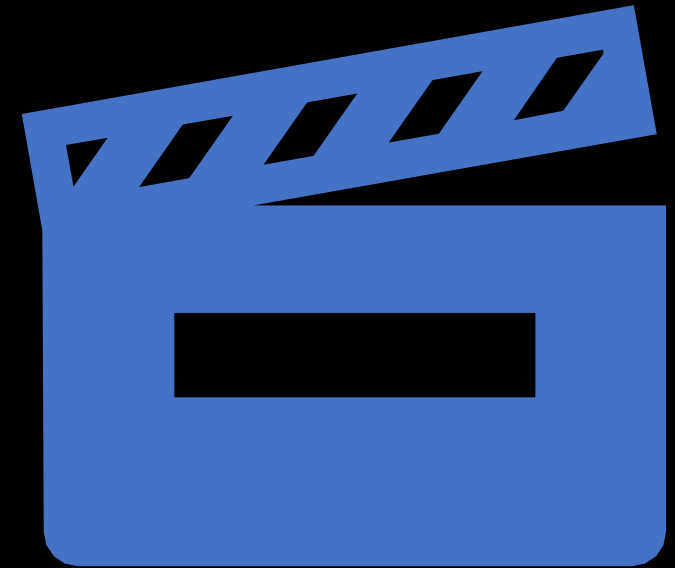
# A Quick Review of Some of those Opening Slides



FILM  
BRINGING DARKNESS TO LIGHT  
NOIR



AFTER THE MOVIE



**NOTES ON FILM NOIR**  
**by Paul Schrader (1972)**

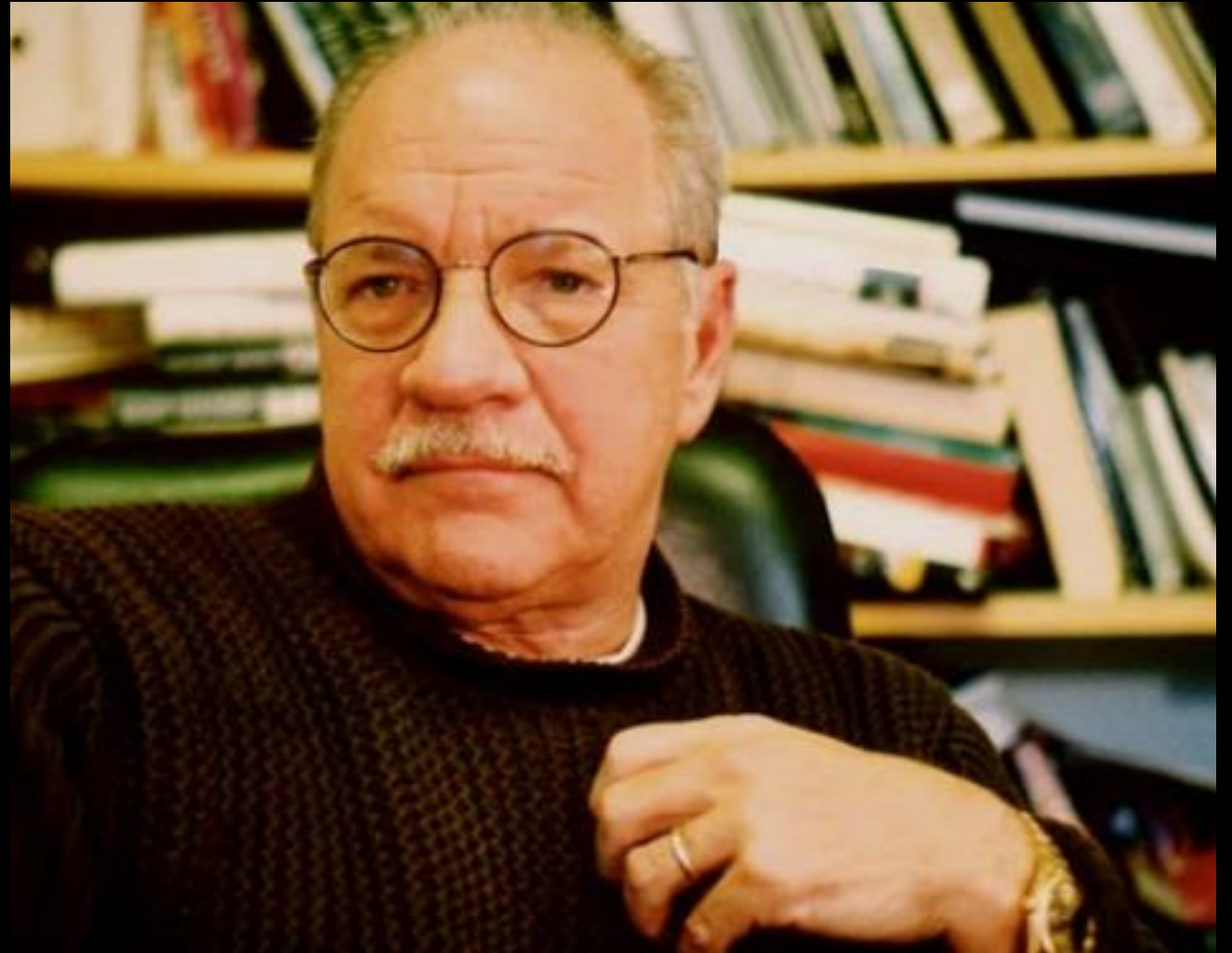
*Excerpts*



# Paul Schrader

(born July 22, 1946) is an American screenwriter, film director, and film critic. He wrote or co-wrote screenplays for four Martin Scorsese films: *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Raging Bull* (1980), *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), and *Bringing Out the Dead* (1999).

Schrader has directed 18 feature films.



In 1946 French critics, seeing the American films they had missed during the war, noticed the new mood of cynicism, pessimism and darkness which had crept into the American cinema. The darkening stain was most evident in routine crime thrillers, but was also apparent in prestigious melodramas.

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Film noir is not a genre. ..It is not defined, as are the western and gangster genres, by conventions of setting and conflict, but rather by the more subtle qualities of tone and mood.

Film noir is also a specific period of film history...In general, film noir refers to those Hollywood films of the Forties and early Fifties which portrayed the world of dark, slick city streets, crime and corruption.

Film noir is an extremely unwieldy period.

Almost every critic has his own definition of film noir, and personal lists of film titles and dates to back it up...A film of urban life is not necessarily a film noir, and a film noir need not necessarily concern crime and corruption. Since film noir is defined by tone rather than genre, it is almost impossible to argue one critic's descriptive definition against another's. How many noir elements does it take to make film noir noir?





FOUR CONDITIONS IN  
1940s' HOLLYWOOD  
WHICH BROUGHT  
ABOUT FILM NOIR:

A black and white photograph of a man in a dark coat standing on a bridge, looking out over a city skyline. The man is in the foreground, seen from the back, looking towards the right. The bridge's structure is visible in the foreground, and the city skyline is in the background.

**1) War and post-war disillusionment**

**2) Post-war realism**

*For e.g.,*

*The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street, Call Northside 777, The Killers,  
Brute Force*

# *The Killers (1946) & Brute Force (1947)*



### 3) The German Influence

Hollywood played host to an influx of German expatriates in the Twenties and Thirties...no greater masters of **chiaroscuro** (the treatment of light and shade in drawing and painting.

- an effect of contrasted light and shadow created by light falling unevenly or from a particular direction on something), eg., Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, Otto Preminger, Max Steiner, *et alii*.



# GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM







AtoZ Challenge 2017

The Old Shelter Blog

# Chiaroscuro

1940s Film Noir

# CHIRIASCURO

- the treatment of light and shade in drawing and painting.
- an effect of contrasted light and shadow created by light falling unevenly or from a particular direction on something.





# The Art of Shadows