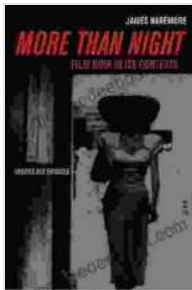


# More Than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts

Film noir is a genre of film characterized by its dark, cynical tone and its exploration of themes such as crime, corruption, and moral ambiguity. The term "film noir" literally means "black film" in French, and it was first used to describe a group of American crime films that were released in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These films were often set in urban environments and featured characters who were morally compromised or outright corrupt.



## More than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts by James Naremore

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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Film noir is often considered to be a subgenre of crime fiction, but it also draws on elements of other genres, such as horror, mystery, and melodrama. Noir films are typically characterized by their dark, shadowy cinematography, their use of flashbacks, and their complex and ambiguous narratives. The genre has been praised for its stylish visuals and its

exploration of dark and disturbing themes, but it has also been criticized for its pessimism and its portrayal of women as weak and helpless.

The origins of film noir can be traced back to the German Expressionist films of the 1920s. These films, such as Fritz Lang's *M* (1931) and Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), were known for their dark, atmospheric visuals and their exploration of psychological themes. Noir films also drew inspiration from the American hardboiled crime novels of the 1930s and 1940s, such as Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1930) and Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1939). These novels were known for their gritty realism and their exploration of the darker side of human nature.

The first film noir is generally considered to be *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), directed by John Huston and starring Humphrey Bogart. This film set the template for many noir films that followed, with its dark, shadowy cinematography, its complex narrative, and its morally ambiguous characters. Other notable noir films include *Double Indemnity* (1944), *The Big Sleep* (1946), *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), and *Touch of Evil* (1958).

Film noir reached its peak in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but it continued to be produced throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s, there was a revival of interest in noir films, and several new noirs were produced, such as *Blade Runner* (1982), *The Name of the Rose* (1986), and *Blood Simple* (1984). In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in noir films, and several new noirs have been produced, such as *Sin City* (2005), *The Killing* (2011), and *Nightcrawler* (2014).

Film noir is a complex and fascinating genre that has had a significant influence on other genres of film and popular culture. The genre's dark, cynical tone and its exploration of themes such as crime, corruption, and moral ambiguity have made it a favorite of audiences around the world. Noir films continue to be produced today, and they continue to offer audiences a unique and compelling cinematic experience.

## Key Characteristics of Film Noir

- **Dark, cynical tone:** Noir films are typically characterized by their dark, cynical tone and their exploration of themes such as crime, corruption, and moral ambiguity.
- **Urban setting:** Noir films are often set in urban environments, such as New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. These cities provide a backdrop for the dark and dangerous world of noir.
- **Morally compromised characters:** Noir films often feature characters who are morally compromised or outright corrupt. These characters are often struggling to make a living or to make the right choices in a difficult world.
- **Dark, shadowy cinematography:** Noir films are known for their dark, shadowy cinematography. This cinematography creates a sense of atmosphere and tension, and it helps to convey the dark and dangerous world of noir.
- **Use of flashbacks:** Noir films often use flashbacks to tell their stories. This technique helps to create a sense of mystery and suspense, and it allows the filmmakers to explore the characters' pasts and motivations.

- **Complex and ambiguous narratives:** Noir films often have complex and ambiguous narratives. These narratives can be difficult to follow, but they often reward viewers who are willing to pay close attention.

## **Influence of Film Noir**

Film noir has had a significant influence on other genres of film and popular culture. The genre's dark, cynical tone and its exploration of themes such as crime, corruption, and moral ambiguity have made it a favorite of audiences around the world. Noir films have also influenced other genres, such as crime fiction, horror, and mystery. The genre's dark, shadowy cinematography has also been influential, and it has been used in films of all genres.

Noir films have also had a significant influence on popular culture. The genre's characters and themes have been parodied and imitated in television shows, novels, comic books, and video games. Noir films have also inspired several fashion trends.

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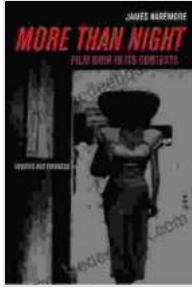
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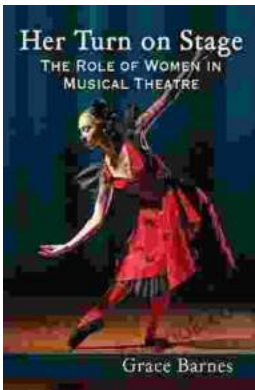
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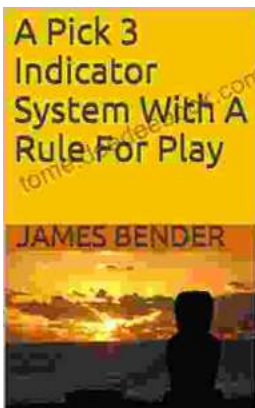


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