



Savages and Saints: The Changing Image of American Indians in Westerns

Bob Herzberg

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Savages and Saints: The Changing Image of American Indians in Westerns Bob Herzberg can be compared to a light shining through a prism. We may have seen bits and pieces of the genuine culture portrayed, but rarely did we see a satisfying and informative whole picture. In films like Cecil B. DeMille's *The Plainsman*, the Indian was a murderous savage with few, if any, redeeming qualities. By the time of Delmer Daves' *Broken Arrow* and other westerns like it, the portrait of the Indians became that of a misunderstood people who only wanted peace. In the wake of Kevin Costner's Oscar-winning *Dances with Wolves*, filmmakers would basically continue this trend into the 1990s and beyond, forever destroying the picture of the Indian as a murderous savage but unfortunately going to the other extreme. This book deals with the changing image of the American Indian in the Western film genre, contrasting the fictionalized images of native Americans portrayed in classic films from Francis Boggs' *Curse of the Redman* to Michael Mann's *Last of the Mohicans* against the historical reality of life on the American frontier. The book tells the stories of frontier warriors, Indian and white, revealing how their stories were often drastically altered on screen according to the times the films were made, the stars involved in the film's production, and the social/political beliefs of the filmmakers. The book also uses studio correspondence, letters from government files, and passages from western novels adapted for the screen, to illustrate the various points of view of the authors who had a direct hand in shaping the Hollywood image of the American Indian. The book features 84 photographs, an index, and a bibliography of more than 100 sources.

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