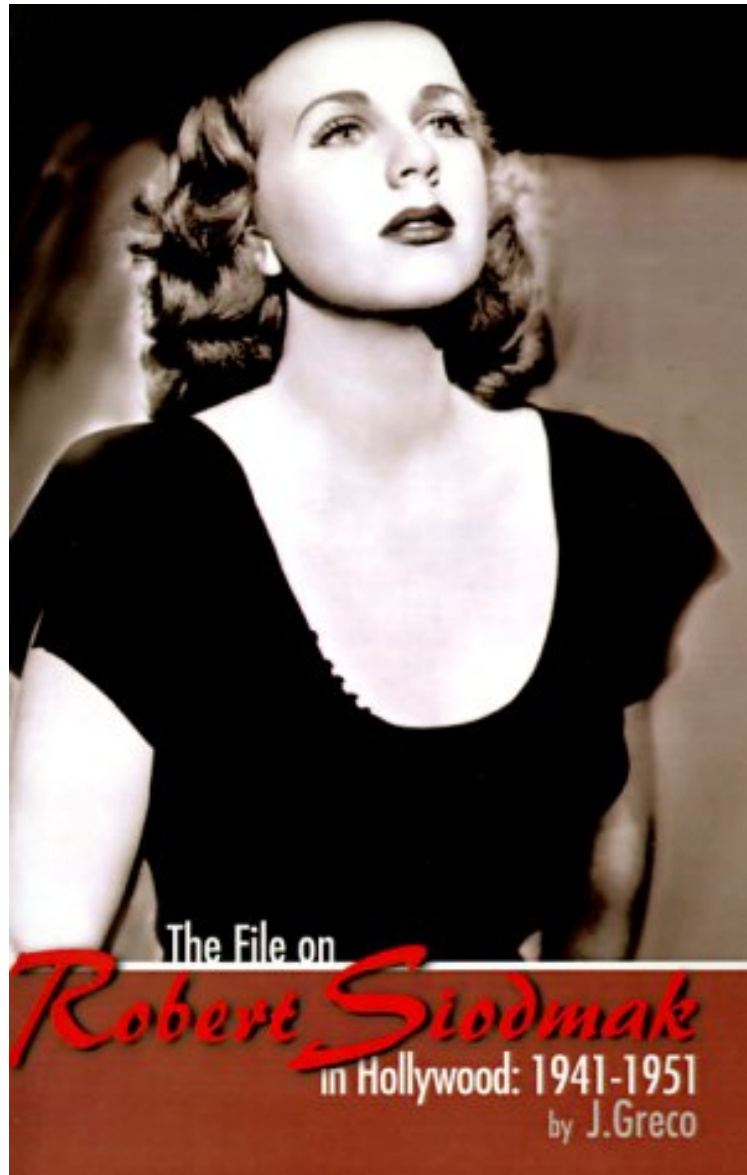


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The File on Robert Siodmak in Hollywood: 1941-1951

Joseph Greco

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Joseph Greco : The File on Robert Siodmak in Hollywood: 1941-1951 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The File on Robert Siodmak in Hollywood: 1941-1951:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Useful dissertation on important noir directorBy RTTo me, the most important thing in a study of an artist is whether it is useful and informative. Books that are wedded to a particular theory or some other narrow approach often tend to date themselves quickly. Greco's study of Robert Siodmak is free

from such limitations. I wanted to know more about Siodmak, having been impressed by *Phantom Lady*, *The File on Thelma Jordan*, *The Killers* and *Criss Cross*. I found Greco's discussions of Siodmak's works absorbing. He does include a lot of plot summary; but that might be appropriate here, on the whole, because some of Siodmak's movies seem a bit hard to locate (for me at least) without buying DVDs. As for those Siodmak films I had never seen, *Christmas Holiday* was the one I wanted to see most after reading this book. I was able to see it in its entirety online; it is fascinating in its choice of locations, e.g., an actual mass in a New Orleans church, and for its characters and cinematography. Although *The File on Robert Siodmak* is not a biography, there is a lot of information on not only the films discussed but the director as well. I came away with a much better idea of the man and the totality of his career. Greco does not buy the notion that Siodmak was merely a good craftsman doing the bidding of the studio system. Of course he had to do some films that he never wanted to do, but Siodmak was able to put his intriguing stamp on his works through an emphasis on characterization over plot, clever staging of his scenes, skillful editing, and the dramatic, provocative cinematography that often characterizes the movies now included under the critical rubric of film noir. As for Siodmak and characterization, for example, Greco writes of *Cry of the City* (1948): "The plot, such as it is, is threadbare: an escaped murderer eludes the cops to find his girl and flee the country--all in vain. But Siodmak never had much concern for plots anyway. 'The more grown-up a story is,' he explained in a Universal press release for *Uncle Harry* [*The Strange Affair of Uncle Harry*, 1945], 'the more it stresses characterization instead of plot.' The film's strengths are in its characters whose individual histories and tragedies impel the narrative forward. 'Life's basic emotions fascinate me,' Siodmak wrote in 1959, 'and the good gangster script lends itself to deep exploration of character and motivation'. . . . Placing characters within their own environments where they seem most comfortable and in control, Siodmak then tilts the setup just enough to show them on edge, off balance slightly, less sure of the world they live in." *The File on Robert Siodmak in Hollywood: 1941-1951* is a doctoral dissertation, and the reader has to make some allowances. For one thing, despite the thorough and useful filmography that covers both his European and American works, and the inclusion of twenty-four illustrations, there is no index. Still, for someone interested in this important but all too overlooked artist, this book is probably a must-have. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Almost all of Siodmak's film noir work, but not quite. Hence, 4 stars. By Robert Strom This is a thesis. It was published by Dissertation.com in 1999. Some may find it dry, like a text book. Also, much to my amazement, there are chapters on all of Robert Siodmak's exceptional film noir movies, except his first, *Phantom Lady*. Also omitted, *Conflict*, with Humphrey Bogart, Alexis Smith and Sydney Greenstreet. This is why I didn't give it 5 stars. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A Master of Film Noir By Michael Samerdyke This is a dissertation published as a book. It should be of interest to readers interested in film noir, as it has very detailed discussions of "*The Killers*" (1946) and "*Criss Cross*" (1949) as well as Siodmak's other Hollywood films noir. The book only examines Siodmak's films. The title, a play on "*The File on Thelma Jordan*," the last of Siodmak's American films noir, sets up false expectations that the book will deal with Siodmak's private life, perhaps politics in that era of WWII and HUAC, but this is not the case. Still, the films get wonderful coverage, and this book should fight the tendency in recent years to overlook Siodmak's contribution to film noir.

Book by Greco, Joseph

From the Publisher Robert Siodmak, who is considered the master of film noir thrillers and crime melodramas, has long been seen as a mere "assignment director," never an artist in complete control of his work. J. Greco's study of Siodmak's Hollywood career dispels this view and presents a unique perspective on the studio system and the director who used cunning to get his own way within it. He incorporates both archival evidence and stylistic analysis to show a distinct correlation between the production histories of Siodmak's studio films and the director's central artistic purpose. Shedding new light on the career of this important film maker, this book is worthwhile reading for the film scholar, the lover of film noir, and the fan of Siodmak's work.