



Action Movies: The Cinema of Striking Back (Short Cuts)

Harvey O'Brien

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Action Movies: The Cinema of Striking Back is a short, sharp introduction to the cinema of action. Action movies aren't just full of action, they're about action: about responding to threats and traumas with extreme prejudice. Action heroes don't seek out adventure, they respond to dire necessity; frequently with panic, hysteria, and rage. Though they look like hypermasculine ubertexts, action movies reveal the fears and anxieties behind the bluster. In fact that's what most of them are actually about. Harvey O'Brien takes us through the evolution of the action movie as a distinct genre, with an eye for the ethics and aesthetics of 'action movies' not just as a description of content, but a moral argument. He revisits some familiar arguments around gender and violence, but brings a new angle to the debate by not taking first impressions for granted. Films examined in detail include *Death Wish*, *Mad Max 2*, *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, *Last Action Hero*, *The Matrix*, *Kill Bill*, and *The Expendables*: disreputable entertainments that nonetheless tug at the popular imagination for good reasons.

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