



Blossoms and Blood: Postmodern Media Culture and the Films of Paul Thomas Anderson

By Jason Sperb



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From his film festival debut *Hard Eight* to ambitious studio epics *Boogie Nights*, *Magnolia*, and *There Will Be Blood*, Paul Thomas Anderson's unique cinematic vision focuses on postmodern excess and media culture. In *Blossoms and Blood*, Jason Sperb studies the filmmaker's evolving aesthetic and its historical context to argue that Anderson's films create new, often ambivalent, narratives of American identity in a media-saturated world.

Blossoms and Blood explores Anderson's films in relation to the aesthetic and economic shifts within the film industry and to America's changing social and political sensibilities since the mid-1990s. Sperb provides an auteur study with important implications for film history, media studies, cultural studies, and gender studies. He charts major themes in Anderson's work, such as stardom, self-reflexivity, and masculinity and shows how they are indicative of trends in late twentieth-century American culture. One of the first books to focus on Anderson's work, *Blossoms and Blood* reveals the development of an understudied filmmaker attuned to the contradictions of a postmodern media culture.



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Editorial Review

Review

"Jason Sperb is not a fan of Paul Thomas Anderson. He's something much better—an intelligent critic trying to discern what's valuable and what's not in Anderson's body of cinematic work." (*Milwaukee Express* 2014-01-29)

"*Blossoms & Blood*, Jason Sperb's very strong new book, doesn't so much argue the case for PTA's greatness as show, slowly and methodically, how he moved through and within the ranks of American filmmaking—a case study of how even the most self-determined directors are always borne aloft by cultural events." (*Cineaste*)

"Sperb has complete mastery of the critical and industrial histories of the films." (*Choice*)

About the Author

Jason Sperb is a lecturer in the Department of Radio/Television/Film at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

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