

# [PDF] The New Biographical Dictionary Of Film: Fifth Edition, Completely Updated And Expanded

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## Books Details:

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Author: David Thomson

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## Description:

**From Publishers Weekly** When this book was first published in 1975, it ignited arguments among many film buffs who disagreed with London-born critic Thomson's strongly opinionated summations. This latest upgrade which includes 300 new entries promises to do the same. Thomson retitled it, he says, "because so much is fresh and different." Now that the reference includes talents who've shot to fame during the past decade or so, including Renee Zellweger ("great range") and Ben Affleck ("boring, complacent and criminally lucky to have got away with everything so far"), it is truly massive, running the gamut from Abbott and Costello, who achieve the "lyrical, hysterical and

mythic," to Ghost World's Terry Zwigoff, "a rare, individual voice". A critical minimalist, Thomson often nails the essence of a personality or career in less than a dozen words, such as Johnny Weissmuller: "No subsequent Tarzan ever matched him the loincloth was retired." He deftly distills entire movies down to single sentences, with Internet-like linkages. Since his Haley Joel Osment profile sneaks in a critique of Spielberg's A.I. ("Osment was uncannily good as the robot/puppet coming to life, but ultimately betrayed by the inability of his director to keep control of the very ambitious material"), the hypnotized reader feels compelled to seek his lengthier comments on Spielberg: "Schindler's List is the most moving film I have ever seen." After the publication of a 1994 edition, the Internet Movie Database became one of the book's major competitors, linking nearly a half million performers with over 260,000 titles, but one still turns to Thomson for witty writing and potent, razor-sharp insights. With an immense passion for pictures, he plunges past the IMDb into the very soul of film. Agent, Laura Morris. (Oct. 11) Forecast: Older readers will want to replace their earlier edition with this one, while an author tour, radio giveaways and advertising in the New York Times Book Review and Film Comment will attract a new generation. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate edition.

**From Library Journal** First published in 1975 and updated in 1981 and 1994, this dictionary returns with 300 new entries, mostly on emerging actors and directors from the last decade (e.g., Luc Besson and Reese Witherspoon), bringing the total to 1300. Film scholar Thomson (Showman: The Life of David O. Selznick) offers extensive but not comprehensive coverage, with entries ranging from a couple of paragraphs to several pages. He seems to write about whoever interests him, leaving some unexplained gaps. For example, he profiles Jeff Bridges but not father Lloyd or brother Beau and includes a fine tribute to the late critic Pauline Kael but ignores Roger Ebert. The book contains a lengthy appreciation of TV talk show master Johnny Carson that probably doesn't belong here. Like other serious film writers his age, Thomson admits that he no longer finds movie-going the "transforming experience" it once was, adding "I think I have learned that I love books more than films." This probably shapes some of his outspoken opinions. For example, writing about Tommy Lee Jones's recent career, he says, "He became coarse or was it depressed? and you felt he had lost faith in the business as his checks grew bigger." Halliwell's Who's Who in the Movies covers far more figures, in less detail than Thomson, though Thomson seems to value opinions as much as facts. Some readers may resent Thomson's dismissal of Paul Newman or John Ford's "appallingly hollow" Grapes of Wrath and How Green Was My Valley ("a monstrous slurry of tears and coal dust"). Halliwell's remains the first choice for a ready reference in film biography collections. If budget permits, large public libraries and college film collections should consider Thomson's book as a browsing title owing to its trenchant, sometimes witty, prose and its up-to-date coverage. Stephen Rees, Levittown Regional Lib., PA  
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