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## Buzz: The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley (Screen Classics)

*Jeffrey Spivak*

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**Jeffrey Spivak : Buzz: The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley (Screen Classics)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Buzz: The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley (Screen Classics):

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. A long overdue study of a mad genius By Larry Billman Prior to the publication of Mr. Spivak's book, Busby Berkeley's genius was primarily saluted in books with glorious visuals ("The Busby Berkeley Book" by Tony Thomas and Jim Terry) or provocative analysis ("Showstoppers: Busby

Berkeley and the Tradition of Spectacle" by Martin Rubin.) Author Spivak dives into the "why" and "how" of Berkeley's visions with a detailed examination of their creation and impact. Along the way, he tries his very best to find the man in the middle. The details he has researched and shared are exemplary and, without moral judgement, presents them for the reader to process. Some of the theories which have been examined by previous writers, film historians and "talking heads" in the excellent 1997 TCM Documentary "Busby Berkeley - Going Through the Roof" and the many "extras" on the two Warners Home Video "Busby Berkeley" DVD collections get a new twist, such as: When did a Kaleidoscope influence his vision? Who came first - Leni Riefenstahl and her Nazi Germany visions or Busby Berkeley and his patriotic American military drills? Were his sexually provocative formations meant to "push the bounds" of censorship? Unlike Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly, Buzz was not interested or knowledgeable in dance. His angles and editing were the prototype and inspiration of how movement would be filmed in music videos and today's dance films. The film itself "dances." Mr. Spivak lets us simply admire - and be dumbfounded by - Busby Berkeley's one-of-a-kind vision which still astounds us today. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Well done By CJSThis was a well done book on film legend, director Busby Berkeley. We see Berkeley's early life and his parent's work on stage and his strong attachment to his mother. His work on Broadway is discussed and then we get into his memorable films - Dames, Gold Diggers of 1935, Hollywood Hotel, For Me and My Gal, Babes on Broadway, and so many others. He was fanatical in his work and I believe the author details this from the quotes by the various people who worked with Berkeley. However, I thought there was too much description of the scenes from the film rather than the how they were done. Most reading this book would be familiar with Berkeley's kaleidoscope shots and I would have liked to have learned more of how they were designed, shot, and other technical tidbits behind them. Berkeley was a self-destructive man - most likely an alcoholic who was responsible for a car accident in which killed several people. The book covers the trials as well as some of the Warner Brothers' stars who testified. Berkeley's later life is also covered as well as his final, happy marriage and move to the Palm Desert area. A good book for anyone interested in films. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating like Busby By Marsha W. This book was full of detail and facts about a genius of movie musicals. It had lots of photos and information on a man who was a complete wonder in his field. He was an original and so creative. I've seen many of his musicals and the concepts he came up with in filming and set decoration were daring and extreme. His personal demons might have aided in his originality.

Characterized by grandiose song-and-dance numbers featuring ornate geometric patterns and mimicked in many modern films, Busby Berkeley's unique artistry is as recognizable and striking as ever. From his years on Broadway to the director's chair, Berkeley is notorious for his inventiveness and signature style. Through sensational films like 42nd Street (1933), Gold Diggers of 1933 (1933), Footlight Parade (1933), and Dames (1934), Berkeley sought to distract audiences from the troubles of the Great Depression. Although his bold technique is familiar to millions of moviegoers, Berkeley's life remains a mystery. Buzz: The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley is a telling portrait of the filmmaker who revolutionized the musical and changed the world of choreography. Berkeley pioneered many conventions still in use today, including the famous "parade of faces" technique, which lends an identity to each anonymous performer in a close-up. Carefully arranging dancers in complex and beautiful formations, Berkeley captured perspectives never seen before. Jeffrey Spivak's meticulous research magnifies the career and personal life of this beloved filmmaker. Employing personal letters, interviews, studio memoranda, and Berkeley's private memoirs, Spivak unveils the colorful life of one of cinema's greatest artists.

From Library Journal "In this thoroughly researched book...Spivak shows a keen understanding of Berkeley's talents but does not ignore his flaws...recommended for knowledgeable movie buffs." --Stephen Rees, Library Journal From Booklist Spivak's well-written biography of the Hollywood choreographer and director, famous for the complicated, kaleidoscopic dances he choreographed for such films as 42nd Street and Gold Diggers of 1933, has scholarly depth yet is gracefully accessible. Spivak's writing is especially strong when he discusses Berkeley's trademark style: playful, visually arresting dances, packed with large numbers of chorus girls dancing in lockstep and his myriad artistic influences, which include his mother, who was in the theater and silent movies; and a stint in the military, where he drilled soldiers to march in formation. In his prime, Berkeley worked extremely long hours like a man possessed, driving himself and his dancers to the brink of collapse and, in Berkeley's case, beyond, into an alcoholism that eventually all but destroyed his career. Cineastes will enjoy Spivak's close attention to Berkeley's obsessively detailed planning and execution processes, and Spivak's no-less-detailed descriptions of the final films. And for those who like movie gossip, there's Berkeley's wild, dysfunctional private life (which included parties, love affairs, and multiple marriages, all fueled by too much alcohol). --Jack Helbig "A gifted storyteller and historian, Jeffrey Spivak paints a finely detailed portrait of dance director Busby Berkeley and his doting actress mother Gertrude. It is a lullaby of Broadway and Hollywood as improbable as any of Berkeley's fantastical musical numbers." --Miles Kreuger, President, The Institute of the American Musical, Inc. "One of the Best Film Books for 2010" Thomas Gladysz --The Huffington Post "This is an excellent book. The research is meticulous, the narrative crisp, and the evaluation of

Berkeley's life and work informative. Buzz fills a major gap in the history of both cinema and musical theater and is must reading, especially for those interested in either."--King Features Syndicate"[Having] rescued [Berkeley's own memoirs] from a garbage clearance... Spivak recounts [Berkeley's] tales of relentless retakes, schedule-skimming night shoots, and crack-ups, whether emotional... or spinal."--Sight Sound Spivak has the biographers sine qua non: a sense of his subjects uniqueness on this Earth. Page Laws, dean of the Honors College, Norfolk State University"Spivak . . . did an enormous amount of research for this biography. He even viewed the least notable of Berkeley's films and tracked unfinished projects." -- Choice"Spivak's text is undoubtedly praiseworthy for utilizing resources...to produce this substantial work."--Cambridge Journals"[Spivak] writes the direct and concise . . . prose that makes for easy reading."--Quarterly of Film and Video"[Buzz: The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley is] the first attempt at a full-blown biography of the innovative choreographer and director whose kaleidoscopic musical numbers of the 1930s have never been equaled. Spivak has done his homework in terms of interviews and archival research--including a discovery of Berkeley's unpublished memoir."--Leonard Maltin's Movie Crazy --"Book of the Month, December 2010" --Turner Classic Movies"Book of the Month, April 2011" -- Sight Sound "Berkeley was a choreographer extraordinaire. Who else could handle 150 dancers in one number? I can't think of anyone, and Berkeley was doing this in the 1920s and 1930s." --California Chronicle "One could be excused for thinking that a book titled Buzz might be about Internet-based P.R. strategies for individuals or businesses, but it's actually a biography -- the only one out there -- of Busby Berkeley, the choreo-philosopher and one of the cinema's most original and distinctive creators." --New Yorker "[Berkeley] was destined for a life in show business. And that life,... was as full of dazzling highs and lurid lows as any melodrama could be." --Barnes and Noble "Spivak describes the entrepreneur's extraordinary career and catalogs his over-the-top life and similarly baroque song-and-dance numbers which featured ornate geometric patterns and influenced much that came after." --Moving Picture Archives News "People today may remember Berkeley as the visionary behind those human geometric designs that beguiled Hollywood audiences during the 1930s and 40s, but Jeffrey Spivak's new biography Buzz: The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley paints a deeper portrait of a true artistic innovator and an often troubled human being." --Chicago Stage Style "Buzz: The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley is a pick for film and biography holdings alike, covering the career and personal life of film director and choreography Busby Berkeley, whose films changed the nature of the musical film itself and saved Warner Bros. studio. Berkeley's own unpublished memoirs, personal letters, legal documents, and more [complimentary] interviews with those who worked with him for a wide-ranging survey to any serious film or biography library." --The Midwest Book "[A] fascinating read." --Playbill "Busby Berkeley's name conjures up kaleidoscopic images of women's body parts: crane shots of synchronized movement, collaged into design and pattern by distance and directorial oversight. Jeffrey Spivak aims to promote Berkeley... to the role of directorial creativity and originality." --Times Literary Supplement "Jeffrey Spivak offers a detailed look into the life and career of one of American cinema's most influential dance directors" --Theater Mania "Spivak's biography perfectly captures Buzz's spirit as well as the legend, all rolled into one. Spivak covers the man from his humble beginnings, cowering under his brother's wardrobe as he first makes an "appearance" on stage, through to his Broadway successes and failures, and on to the peaks and nadirs he experienced in Hollywood. An even-handed tribute all around." -- Broadway World"At the time, movie musicals were stale and outdated, but with a touch of the Buzz magic, they came alive. Most credit Berkeley with saving and then recreating a whole new genre of the movie musical. If you are a lover of musicals, this is the book for you."--Chew Digest Books --"Looking for a gift for a movie lover? Consider Jeffrey Spivak's new book, "Buzz: The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley"." --New York Post