Film Noir

Literally meaning “black,” the concept of “noir” was first applied in France to describe the British Gothic novel. It was later used in “Serie Noire,” a collection of American fiction, translated into French, including the writings of “hard-boiled” novelists such as Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Cornell Woolrich, James M. Cain and Horace McCoy. French film critics coined the term “film noir” by analogy with those literary works (many of which had been made into film). Many noir films were crafted by German and central European émigrés, trained in the UFA studios in the 1920s and early 1930s and influenced by German Expressionism. The noir ambience is dominated by low-key lighting, chiaroscuro effects and deep shadows, creating feelings of disorientation, loneliness and entrapment. Along with other critics, Paul Schrader feels that the cycle of “noir” films starts with John Huston’s THE MALTESE FALCON (1941), and begins to decline after Orson Welles’ TOUCH OF EVIL (1958). Within these years, noir directors included Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, Robert Siodmak, Michael Curtiz, William Dieterle, and Otto Preminger. Titles such as THE BIG SLEEP (1946), MUR and KISS ME DEADLY (1955) are examples of noir style and storyline. The classic DOUBLE INDEMNITY (1944) has been preserved by the UCLA Film and Television Archive.

The “noir” style periodically resurfaces as an homage to these Hollywood classics, American films like BULLITT (1968), KLUTE (1971), CHINATOWN (1974), BODY HEAT (1981) and the contemporary remakes of THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE and D.O.A. are a tribute to the “noir” sensibility.
Film Noir

**FILMS**

*(this is only a partial list – consult the Archive Research and Study Center for further listings)*


*Murder, My Sweet* (1944). RKO. Director, Edward Dmytryk. Writer, John Paxton. Based on the novel *Farewell, My Lovely* by Raymond Chandler. Study Copy: VA3350 M


**PRINT RESOURCES**

*(for more information consult the UCLA Arts Library)*

