

Celluloid Heroes & Mechanical Dragons

By John David Ebert

From the author's introduction

It is my contention in this book that film, with the aid of myth, is expanding and developing the great themes of the Western canon, and that it was not until the late 1960s and 1970s, when filmmakers began to make conscious use of myth, that this process began. And by "conscious use of myth," I mean, for example, that filmmakers such as Stanley Kubrick, George Lucas and George Miller drew inspiration for their narratives from Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, while Francis Ford Coppola structured the climax of *Apocalypse Now* upon the model of Frazer's myth of the slain bull god-king in *The Golden Bough*.

From these four examples of the deliberate use of myth, five of the most successful films of all time were created – *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Star Wars*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *The Road Warrior* – which then spawned hordes of secondary imitators whose work did not bear the direct influence of mythic scholarship, but were mythologically inspired nonetheless by way of their being affiliated to these five films. To this secondary group belongs such films as *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *E.T.*, *Altered States*, *The Last Wave*, *Dune*, *Jacob's Ladder* (inspired by *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*), the *Star Trek* movies and others.

“John Ebert's *Celluloid Heroes* is a profoundly erudite look at the deeper meanings of cinema. Drawing on his incredible range of knowledge of myth, literature, ancient history, and modern communication theory, Ebert weaves a tale as engrossing as the films he analyzes.”

Leonard Shlain
Author of *The Alphabet vs. The Goddess*

The Author

John David Ebert is an independent scholar & writer who was an editor with The Joseph Campbell Foundation.

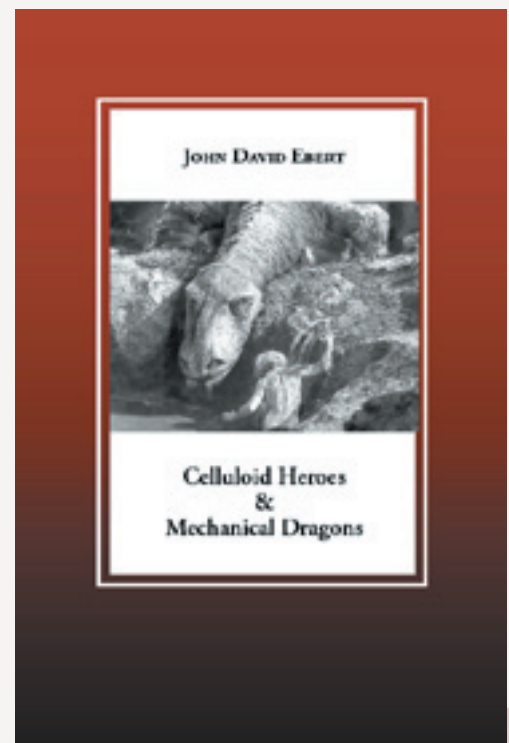
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