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## The South and film

*Warren French*

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**Warren French : The South and film** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The South and film:

Will the South rise again--this time cinematically? The answer to this question is among the subjects considered in this collection of essays. Though the South has provided the setting for outstanding and controversial films such as *Gone With the Wind* and *The Birth of a Nation*, these did not foster a genre of imitative films, and there never was a "Southern" as there was a "Western." This may have changed, however, in 1969-70 with the appearance of a film that suggested a set of stereotypes particularly congenial to films with southern settings. In *Easy Rider*, the characters departed not for the West on horseback but for the South on motorcycles, carrying with them the seeds of their own destruction, and since then the only credible films about the West have been parodies. Following *Easy Rider*, there have been several "gasoline operas," and the South has been prominently featured in them. These attempts to create a Southern film genre and the fascinating question of how long it can be maintained is the focus of four of the essays in this collection. In addition, there are provocative reconsiderations of the Southern film classics *Gone With the Wind*, *The Birth of a Nation*, *Jezebel*, and *The Southerner*. Another group of essays looks at the "vision" of the South projected in the works of three renowned auteurs--John Ford, Robert Altman, and Martin Ritt. Any discussions about the South and film would be incomplete without a consideration of the importance of female characters and the

relation of film to the works of William Faulkner, and these are the subjects of two groups of essays. The final section of essays focuses on the problems of capturing on film the unique qualities of a region and on the perils and pleasures of the search for authenticity when shooting in regional locations. These essays, which introduce a vast subject, were included in the Spring/Summer 1981 issue of *The Southern Quarterly: A Journal of the Arts in the South*.

From the Inside Flap Twenty-two essays that explore the evolution of southern film and its future