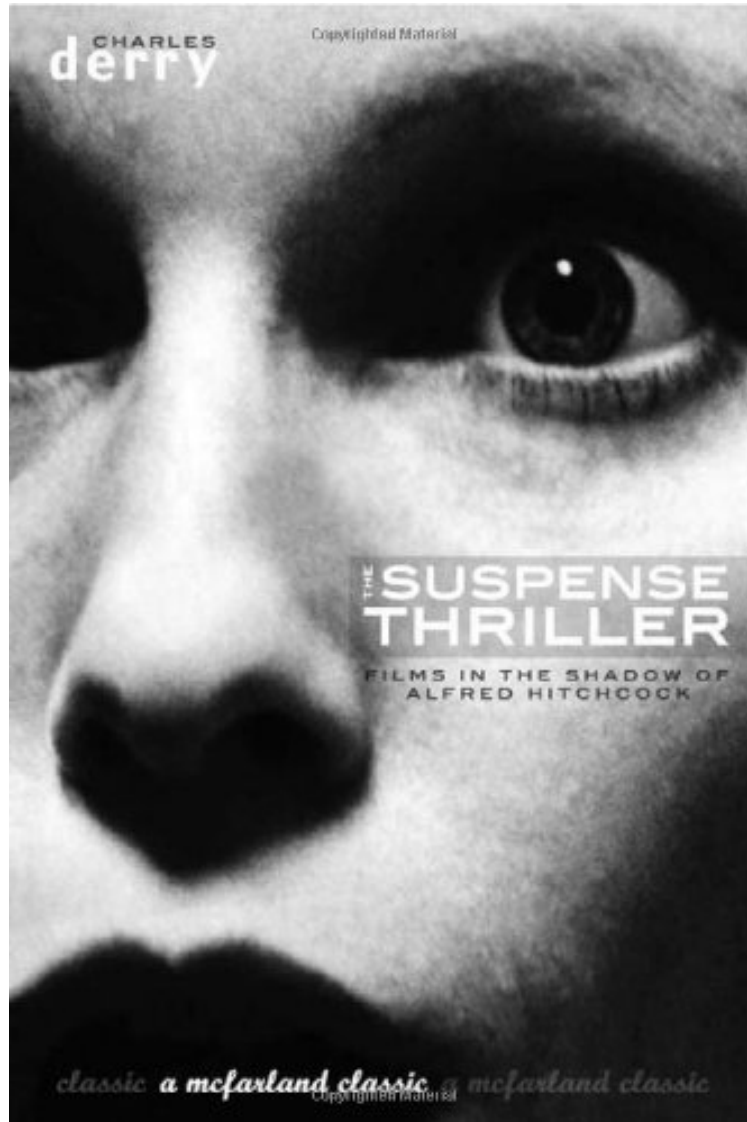


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The Suspense Thriller: Films in the Shadow of Alfred Hitchcock (McFarland Classics)

Charles Derry

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This book is a comprehensive study of one of the most popular genres in the cinema. From a perspective sympathetic to popular culture, this study analyzes a large number of primarily American and European films by a variety of distinguished directors, including Alfred Hitchcock, Claude Chabrol, John Frankenheimer, Michelangelo Antonioni, and Costa-Gavras. Indispensable to anyone interested in understanding how suspense thrillers work and what they mean, this book provides insightful analysis of hundreds of memorable films, while at the same time working as a virtual how-to manual for anyone trying to write a Hitchcock-like thriller. The first section of the book is primarily theoretical. It offers a bibliographical survey and then explains why we so profoundly enjoy these suspenseful films of murder and intrigue. A chapter on "Thrills: or, How Objects and Empty Spaces Compete to Threaten Us" explores the psychological concept of the thrill and relates it to the psyche of the spectator. To what extent does the suspense thriller represent a symbolic and vicarious experience of danger? A chapter on "Suspense That Makes the Spectator Take a Breath" explores the crucial narrative concept of suspense and relates it to the psychological mechanisms of anxiety incited in the spectator. Why do we like to be scared? A final theoretical chapter offers a dynamic definition of the suspense thriller derived in part from Edgar Allan Poe and based primarily on content analysis. The second section of the book is more of an historical survey and devotes one chapter to each of the suspense thriller's primary sub-genres. These chapters provide close readings of more than 150 major films and detailed analysis of the suspense thriller's conventions, themes, and recurrent iconography. Sub-genres include *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *Body Heat*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *The China Syndrome*, *Missing*, *The Passenger*, *Spellbound*, *Obsession*, *Marathon Man* and *Blue Velvet*. A final chapter explores areas for further research and offers concluding insights.