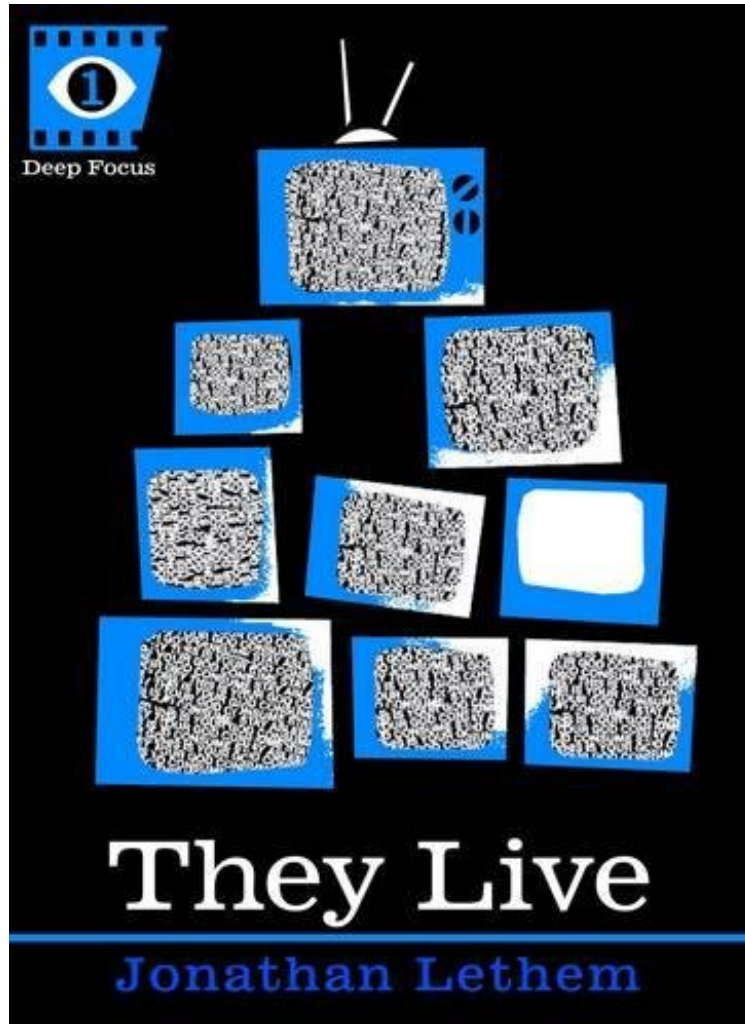


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They Live (Deep Focus)

Jonathan Lethem

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Jonathan Lethem : They Live (Deep Focus) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised They Live (Deep Focus):

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Jonathan's Term Paper By RavenBW This is for fans of John Carpenter's films as well as of Lethem's work and sheds a bright light on both; not the least reason being that it does in fact read like someone's thesis or term paper or extended critical review but as many of Lethem's readers already know, a critical review of postmodernism especially in its relationship to pop culture is a major concern of and impetus for Lethem's own work both fiction and non fiction. Still it does read like a paper and it is about a film that while important in its message was not one of my particular liking as compared to other of his films. I was compelled to watch the film to see what Lethem was talking about as I never saw it before; as purely academic exercise and it was a painful view especially due to Roddy Piper's acting. But one could see the reasons for why Lethem considered it

worth writing about. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By CustomerGreat read and getting more relevant every day. 12 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Lethem Puts on the Glasses and Sees the Truth By Bob Fingerman Lethem writes a handy (pocket-sized), dandy (very thoughtful), scene-by-scene analysis of John Carpenter's seminal paranoid sci-fi B-movie classic. Lethem is a high-minded fellow who can take the time to truly appreciate a high point in low culture like *They Live*. Essential reading for fans of Carpenter's oeuvre.

Deep Focus is a series of film books with a fresh approach. Take the smartest, liveliest writers in contemporary letters and let them loose on the most vital and popular corners of cinema history: midnight movies, the New Hollywood of the sixties and seventies, film noir, screwball comedies, international cult classics, and more. Passionate and idiosyncratic, each volume of Deep Focus is long-form criticism that's relentlessly provocative and entertaining. Kicking off the series is Jonathan Lethem's take on *They Live*, John Carpenter's 1988 classic amalgam of deliberate B-movie, sci-fi, horror, anti-Yuppie agitprop. Lethem exfoliates Carpenter's paranoid satire in a series of penetrating, free-associational forays into the context of a story that peels the human masks off the ghoulish overlords of capitalism. His field of reference spans classic Hollywood cinema and science fiction, as well as popular music and contemporary art and theory. Taking into consideration the work of Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, James Brown, Fredric Jameson, Shepard Fairey, Philip K. Dick, Alfred Hitchcock, and Edgar Allan Poe, not to mention the role of wrestlers including *They Live* star Rowdy Roddy Piper in contemporary culture, Lethem's *They Live* provides a wholly original perspective on Carpenter's subversive classic.

From Booklist I've come here to chew bubblegum and kick ass. And I'm all out of bubblegum. It doesn't rank with go ahead, make my day, but that memorable line from director John Carpenter's 1988 sf action satire *They Live* holds a special place in the hearts of cult-movie fans everywhere. This low-budget, poorly acted genre piece is the first specimen put under the microscope in a new series of long-form film criticism books called Deep Focus. The series takes a hip, contemporary writer and lets him or her loose on a classic (or not so classic) movie. *They Live* is lovingly picked apart, scene by scene, by Jonathan Lethem, the best-selling author of *The Fortress of Solitude* (2003) and a highly respected essayist. He finds hidden subtext in the smallest of details, while jovially debating the intentionality of Carpenter's views on television, consumerism, race, misogyny, and so forth. In Lethem's opinion, *They Live* is probably the stupidest film ever to take ideology as its explicit subject. It's also probably the most fun. He is convincing. --Chris Keech Praise for *They Live*" Apparently, author Lethem was the only other person than me to take *They Live* as brilliant, stinging social commentary. He explains why in this great book. Sam Stowe, California Literary "Who would have thought that one of the cleverest, most accessibly in-depth film books released this year would be a smart-ass novelist exploring a cheesy-cheeky 80s sci-fi flick wherein a former wrestler combats an alien occupation via magic sunglasses? . . . [Jonathan Lethem] is able to seriously dissect the movie's message and often highbrow references, while also fully acknowledging its silliness." Hartford Advocate "Novelist and occasional critic Jonathan Lethem pulls apart the threads of John Carpenter's 1988 science fiction film of the same title, to entertaining and illuminating effect . . . Carpenter's film emerges from Lethem's inspection a more human and mysterious work, less coherent perhaps but fully immersed in the noisy, ceaseless traffic of cultural exchange." The New York Times Book "A fun read, packed with references to other films, literature and artists . . . one of the few books one would enjoy reading while watching a movie." USA Today's Pop Candy