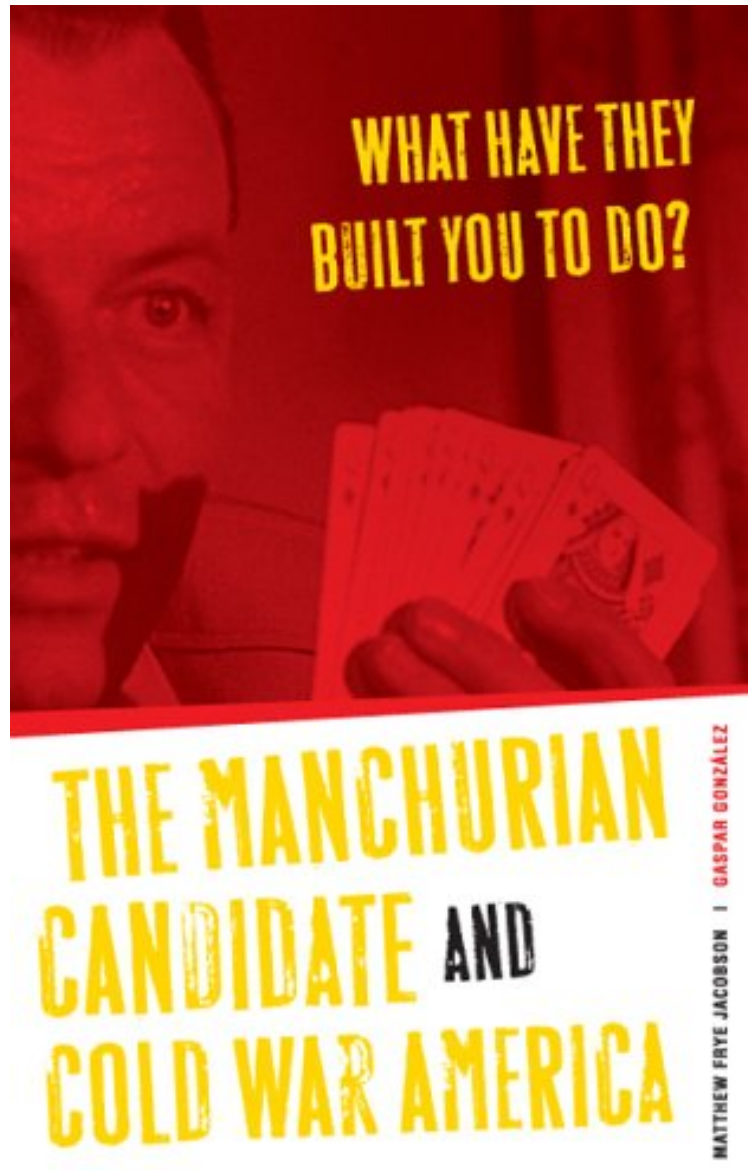


What Have They Built You to Do?: The Manchurian Candidate and Cold War America

Matthew Frye Jacobson, Gaspar Gonzalez
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Matthew Frye Jacobson, Gaspar Gonzalez : What Have They Built You to Do?: The Manchurian Candidate and Cold War America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised What Have They Built You to Do?: The Manchurian Candidate and Cold War America:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. If Frank Sinatra Was Here...By SteveHalf of this book was written by Gaspar Gonzalez who knows everything in the world about a certain slice of South Florida. This sorta academic tome is fine reading for those who loved the movie and hated the war in the frig.9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A revelatory look at *The Manchurian Candidate* -- and the world it came out ofBy ScottAnyone intrigued by *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) deserves to check out this book, which delves deep into the film's artistry and (I mean this in the best sense) its insanity too.For those who simply love the film -- for its inventive visual sense, for its mix of camp and horror, for its witty dialogue, for its cockamamie yet gripping plot -- there's a lot to love in this book. There's all the newly unearthed backstory to the making of the film -- for instance, how Frank Sinatra threw himself into this Cold War satire of McCarthyism just after he'd felt the chill of the blacklist himself (he'd hired Hollywood Ten screenwriter Albert Maltz to adapt a novel about a US soldier executed for desertion, then been forced to drop Maltz and the project) or how Sinatra personally got the thumb's-up from JFK in order to convince United Artists executives that the film wasn't too anti-Soviet. And there's a lot of new analysis of the film itself too: the authors help solve one of the great mysteries of the film -- what the hell is the Rosie character doing in the train, and why does she fall for Frank Sinatra's Major Marco? -- by demonstrating, convincingly, that the film is patently misquoting from earlier train courtship scenes by Hitchcock (*Strangers on a Train*, *North by Northwest*), where men square off with an enigmatically curious fellow passenger. Dreaming about women's garden parties night after night, Major Marco has become a very strange kind of man -- and Rosie is there to draw out the strangeness.Yet this is more than just a great book about a great film. It's also a wonderful primer on how the Cold War shot through American culture -- how Cold War ideas were the foundation even for films, say, made by anti-McCarthy directors like John Frankenheimer. It gets under the skin of the movie, you might say. So there's not only a fine discussion of how the film satirizes McCarthyism (which you'd expect), but also an illuminating discussion of how the film understands the threat and allure of Asian culture, leveraging Orientalist cliches throughout. I'd never really thought through the oddness of the film's opening scene, which is set in a Korean brothel, until I read this book. (Which brings up another interesting twist from the film's backstory: Khigh Dhiegh, who plays the viciously madcap Dr. Lo, was not Asian or Asian-American. Originally named Kenneth Dickerson, he was born to an Anglo-Egyptian-Sudanese family in New Jersey. That's a nice factoid but not too unexpected -- Hollywood in that period rarely employed Asian or Asian-American actors, even for Asian roles. More amazing is that Dhiegh, who played the Asian villain in countless roles, took up another Asian self in his offstage life: he founded a Taoist institute in North Hollywood and, until his death in 1991, conducted seminars on the I Ching and Eastern ways of knowing.)A word to the wise: as the above paragraph might suggest, this is not your typical fan-driven book. It's juicy but also thoughtful and thought-provoking, raising a lot of questions about how the Cold War continues to hang over our contemporary moment. As someone who teaches the Cold War to undergraduates at the college level, I can't wait to assign it so that they can appreciate the unique genius of the film, and so that they might ask themselves, along with Raymond Shaw in the film, "what they've been built to do".

Considered by many to be the best political thriller ever made, *The Manchurian Candidate* is as entertaining, troubling, and relevant today as it was in 1962. Starring Frank Sinatra, Laurence Harvey, and Angela Lansbury, and directed with probing insight by John Frankenheimer, the film was widely acclaimed as a masterpiece. Largely out of circulation for the next two decades, it acquired a well-deserved cult following until it was rereleased during the last year of the Reagan presidency, when its pointed satire of political and media manipulation seemed more timely than ever. In *What Have They Built You to Do?* a key line of dialogue from the original filmMatthew Frye Jacobson and Gaspar Gonzalez undertake an ambitious reexamination of *The Manchurian Candidate*, the 1959 novel by Richard Condon on which it was based, andcritically analyzed here for the first timethe 2004 remake directed by Jonathan Demme. Based on close readings of the film and broad investigations into the eras in which it was made and rediscovered, the authors decode the many layers of meaning within and surrounding the film, from the contradictions of the Cold War it both embodies and parodiesMcCarthyism and Kennedy liberalism, individualism and conformityto its construction of Asian villains, overbearing women, and male heroes in a society anxious about race, gender, and sexuality. Through their multifaceted analysis of *The Manchurian Candidate* (in all its incarnations), Jacobson and Gonzalez raise provocative questions about power and anxiety in American politics and society from the Cold War to today.Matthew Frye Jacobson teaches American studies at Yale University. His books include *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in PostCivil Rights America*. Gaspar Gonzalez is an independent scholar and journalist in Miami. He has taught American studies at Yale University and film studies at the University of Miami.