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Visions of the Apocalypse: Spectacles of Destruction in American Cinema

Wheeler Winston Dixon

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Visions of the Apocalypse examines the cinema's fascination with the prospect of nuclear and/or natural annihilation, as seen in such films as *Saving Private Ryan, Bowling for Columbine, We Were Soldiers, Invasion U.S.A., The Last War, Tidal Wave, The Bed Sitting Room, The Last Days of Man on Earth* and numerous others. It also considers the ways in which contemporary cinema has become increasingly hyper-conglomerised, leading to films with ever-higher budgets and fewer creative risks. Along the way, the author discusses such topics as the death of film itself, to be replaced by digital video; the political and social tensions that have made these visions of infinite destruction so appealing to the public; and the new wave of Hollywood war films, coupled with escapist comedies, in the post-9/11 era. Encompassing both questions of physical and filmic mortality *Visions of the Apocalypse* is a meditation on the questions of time, memory and the cinema's seemingly unending appetite for spectacles of destruction.

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