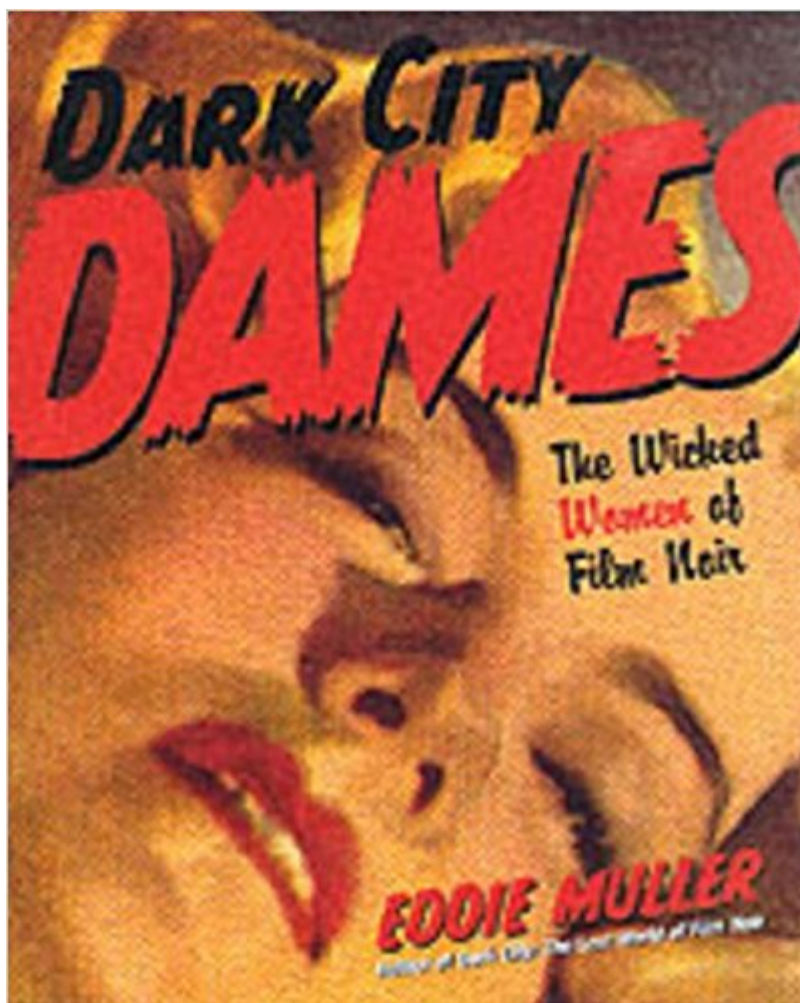


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Dark City Dames: The Wicked Women Of Film Noir



Synopsis

Film noir was the dark side of the movies' happily-ever-after mythology. Sinister and sexy, it forged a new icon: the tough, independent, take-no-guff dame. Determined, desirable, dangerous when cornered, she could handle trouble -- or deal out some of her own. If you thought these women were something special onscreen, wait till you meet the genuine articles. In *Dark City Dames*, acclaimed film historian Eddie Muller profiles six women who made a lasting impression in this cinematic terrain -- from veteran "bad girls" Audrey Totter, Marie Windsor, and Jane Greer to unexpected genre fixtures Evelyn Keyes, Coleen Gray, and Ann Savage. The book surveys the lives of these formidable women during the height of their careers circa 1950, as they balanced love and career, struggled against typecasting, and sought fulfillment in a ruthless business. Their personal stories -- teeming with larger-than-life characters like Howard Hughes, L.B. Mayer, Robert Mitchum, Otto Preminger, and John Huston -- offer an illuminating counterpoint to their movies, such as *Out of the Past*, *Detour*, *The Lady in the Lake*, and *The Killing*. Then *Dark City Dames* revisits each one of these women today, fifty years on, to witness their hard-won -- and triumphant -- survival. On every page their own voices ring through, reflecting on their lives with as much passion, pain, intelligence, energy, and humor as any movie script. *Dark City Dames* re-creates the excitement and glamour of a group of gifted performers who lived out their youthful fantasies -- and, along the way, remade the image of the American woman.

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Customer Reviews

Penzler Pick, August 2001: Two years ago, I wrote a book titled 101 Greatest Films of Mystery and Suspense. In addition to watching every one of those movies again (not exactly a horrendous ordeal), I did tons of research, flipping through or reading more than a hundred books about film. The best book--the one with the most offbeat stories and anecdotes, the most accurate information, and the most entertainingly written--was *Dark City* by Eddie Muller. It was a fascinating study of the great films noir, and a page didn't go by without my learning something. Now Muller is back with *Dark City Dames*. It's a very different kind of book, not offering the big-picture overview that *Dark City* did, but it's nearly as fascinating. It's a portrait of six of the greatest femme fatales of the wonderful black-and-white crime movies that filled the screens in the 1940s and '50s: Jane Greer (the star, with Robert Mitchum, of *Out of the Past* and *The Big Steal*), Marie Windsor (*The Killing*, *The Narrow Margin*), Ann Savage (*Detour*), Evelyn Keyes (*The Prowler*, *Johnny O'Clock*), Audrey Totter (*The Lady in the Lake*, *The Unsuspected*), and Coleen Gray (*The Sleeping City*, *Kiss of Death*, *Nightmare Alley*). But these aren't rehashes of plots and quotes from the rave reviews of these stars. Muller personally interviewed each of them, and the second half of the book is a kind of "Where are they now?" Perhaps oddly--perhaps not--these wicked, lying, cheating, double-crossing, money-hungry temptresses of the screen turn out to be rather nice ladies, as normal as one could expect of beautiful movie stars, and Muller brings them fully to life. There are regrets here, both on the part of the reader and of Muller, that space couldn't be devoted to many of the biggest female stars of film noir. There's no Barbara Stanwyck, or Gloria Grahame, or Veronica Lake, or Lisabeth Scott, or Claire Trevor, or Ida Lupino. Scott became a silent recluse, and the others had died. But that is only in real life. On the screen they will live forever, just as they do in Muller's marvelous love letter to them all. --Otto Penzler

Shot in stark black and white, dressed in negligees and toting pistols, the dangerous dames of film noir boldly linger in our minds. In this entertaining and often insightful look at noir stars Marie Windsor, Audrey Totter, Jane Greer, Ann Savage, Evelyn Keyes and Coleen Gray Muller recreates 1950s Hollywood, the heyday of film noir and B thrillers, and reports on these actors today. Combining interviews with his subjects, a comprehensive knowledge of Hollywood and an astute analysis of the social, political and economic pressures of the industry, Muller (*Dark City: The Lost World of Film Noir*) shrewdly documents the role of women (as characters and performers) in the genre and the industry. Muller delivers numerous impressive insider tidbits: Greer's secret pregnancy while filming *The Big Steal*; Totter's close friendship with bad girl Gloria Graham; Beatrice Pearson's on-set problems with her controlling lesbian lover while filming *Force of Evil*; and Keyes's struggles

with husband John Huston's marijuana habit. The book's strength lies in Muller's portraits of these women today; all lead contented and productive lives and, aided by Muller's fluid narrative style, tell tales shimmering with mystique, absurdity, scandal or poignancy. While covering a specific slice of Hollywood and film history primarily the 1940s and '50s Muller's look at these noted female performers is an important addition to popular feminist and film literature. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Another superb piece of interesting information delivered through poetic prose from the aptly-anointed Czar of Noir, Eddie Muller. This time he profiles the then and now of six essential women synonymous to Film Noir. I enjoyed this almost as much as his earlier masterpiece titled "Dark City - The Lost World of Film Noir." I've read just about everything published on this subject and can honestly say nobody does it better than Muller. Buy this book and while your at it, throw "Dark City" into your cart along with it... you'll thank me for it later.

"Dark City Dames": The Wicked Women of Film Noir is a fascinating book about some extraordinary screen actresses from the "good old days" of Hollywood. Eddie Muller's unique work is definitely not the typical coffee table volume composed for Hollywood nostalgia addicts. His superbly researched profiles of six noted actresses from the film noir genre; Coleen Gray, Jane Greer, Evelyn Keyes, Ann Savage, Audrey Totter and Marie Windsor, create real life drama from the femme fatale images of the past. Mr. Muller cleverly organized his book with two chapters for each actress, past and present. In every instance, all of the profiled women freely share their triumphs and disappointments, their loves and heartbreaks. While many of the insider stories and tidbits offered by Mr. Muller will amuse and titillate the reader, it is the admirable spirit, determination and character of these women that truly touched my heart. A case in point was the late Marie Windsor, a prime example of a unique talent who never realized her supernova screen potential. Toward the end of her life, Miss Windsor was desperately ill, taking care of a sicker husband, supporting a stepson, managing a household and holding down an important position with the Screen Actors Guild. Through it all, she remained determined to persevere and was ever grateful for a good life fully lived. Mr. Muller adroitly weaves the central themes of film noir, Hollywood and the studio system through the book, but the actresses and their fascinating personal lives earn the deserved star billing. "Dark City Dames" is a must for the film noir buff, but is a terrific book for anyone who enjoys the indomitability and compassion of the human spirit. They don't make movies like they used to, because they don't have actresses like these six around anymore.

It's not fair for me to review this book, as the author, Eddie Muller, is a friend of mine. I can say that, at the time it was written, the women profiled were still alive and interviewed by Eddie. I can't swear to that because I haven't even read the book yet. But it's out of print so I grabbed it as soon as I saw it for offer. It's a great companion to DARK CITY, by the same author and a definitive work on Hollywood in the 50s and 60s. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

Very entertaining and compassionate exploration into the lives of these incredible actresses.

If you liked DARK CITY, Muller's previous book, you'll love his latest! He interviews six Noir dames who starred in the most notable films of that era. You'd be hard pressed to find ANYTHING on any of these ladies, since they were not BIG stars. But Muller gives them their due and the praise they deserve. The photos are great, but you wish there were MORE (my reason for leaving off a star in my rating). If you want to know about the women behind such great Noir classics like Narrow Margin, Kiss of Death, Detour, you'll really enjoy this book. It's a great companion to all the other Noir books out there! Recommended!

This looks cool, but it's actually a Christmas gift for my son who is into film noir, so I'll have to wait til after he reads it to know how good it is.

What a great book for the "film noir" buff. I've seen the author on TCM and I have his other book on the same subject.

All you need to know about Dark City Dames, and how some of these actresses led a noir life, quite interesting.

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