

Investigating Film Noir: Programme Notes & Sources

5. Wartime Noir (3rd November)

Films

Mrs Miniver (William Wyler, 1942)

Since You Went Away (John Cromwell, 1944)

Casablanca (Michael Curtiz, 1942)

Mildred Pierce (Michael Curtiz, 1945)

Damaged Lives (Edgar G Ulmer, 1933)

Detour (Edgar G Ulmer, 1945)

The Big Sleep (Howard Hawks, 1946)

Refs

'If it is an "escape" picture, will it harm the war effort by creating a false picture of America, her Allies, or the world we live in?'

Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry, 1942

'... virtually all of Hollywood's major genres were affected by the war and might in some way be included under the general rubric of "war film."'

Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s* (1999)

Joe Rosenthal, widely syndicated photo: Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima (23rd Feb, 1945)

On the 'Conversion Narrative', see Dana Polan, *Power and Paranoia: History, Narrative, and the American Cinema 1940-1950* (1986)

James M Cain, *Mildred Pierce*

The 'most painful feature was the abstract, ambient horror, inspired by an invisible enemy' which 'formed the fabric of our consciousness and influenced the whole meaning of the world.' 'Everything we did was equivocal,' he says, 'we never quite knew whether we were doing right or doing wrong; a subtle poison corrupted even our best actions'.

Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Paris Under the Occupation,' *La France libre* (15 November 1944)

'The 'sensibility' of film noir 'certainly entertains close affinities to the sense of loss and cultural despair which many German language exile filmmakers experienced in 1930s and 40s America. These films frequently revolve around questions of (war) trauma, psychosis, memory, and amnesia, split or doubled identity, featuring men driven from their home, outsiders who cannot comprehend the political and social forces that determine their existence'.

Gerd Gemünden, *A Foreign Affair: Billy Wilder's American Films* (New York: Berghahn, 2008)