



# Jean-Luc Godard, Cinema Historian

*By Michael Witt*

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Originally released as a videographic experiment in film history, Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* has pioneered how we think about and narrate cinema history, and in how history is taught through cinema. In this stunningly illustrated volume, Michael Witt explores Godard's landmark work as both a specimen of an artist's vision and a philosophical statement on the history of film. Witt contextualizes Godard's theories and approaches to historiography and provides a guide to the wide-ranging cinematic, aesthetic, and cultural forces that shaped Godard's groundbreaking ideas on the history of cinema.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

"Witt tackles his subject, in what is his first sole-authored book, in such an unfussy manner and without the elliptical quality tainting much Godard commentary?artsy, complicated prose trying to compensate for a kernel of confusion?that the experience of reading Cinema Historian is like a door swinging open." ?New Left Review

"Michael Witt's Jean-Luc Godard: Cinema Historian... [is] one of the most vital film books of recent memory." ?Spectrum Culture

"Overall, Jean-Luc Godard: Cinema Historian is quite simply a brilliant book, a sustained meditation on Godard's approach to history and his Histoire(s) du cinema, but also an extraordinary summation of Godard's entire career." ?Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory

"Witt provides a thorough account of Histoire(s) du cinéma's genesis and an erudite yet highly readable exegesis of its manifold narratives and ramifications" ?French Studies

"[T]here is little to find fault with in Witt's methodically argued, rigorously researched and compellingly written text. It almost seems as if he has left no stone unturned in attempting to decipher Histoire(s) du cinéma, even if the futile nature of such an endeavour is freely admitted: there will always, in Godard's work, be elements that remain impenetrable to his exegetes." ?Senses of Cinema

"What Witt communicates nicely... is the richness and depth of Godard's project. Histoire(s) du cinéma is a work that needs to be engaged with on its own terms, but its complexity and strength are only enhanced by the kind of detailed analysis that Witt and others have begun to provide it with." ?Film Quarterly

"There has been a slew of important books lately devoted to post-60s Godard [...] But none seems quite as durable?either a beautiful object or as a user-friendly intellectual guide?as Jean-Luc Godard: Cinema Historian, Witt's superbly lucid jargon-free book about Histoire(s) du cinéma. Copiously illustrated with

frame enlargements that complement the text without ever seeming redundant, this examination of the philosophical, historical and aesthetic underpinnings of Godard's masterwork isn't only about a four and-a-half-hour video; it's also about the work's separate reconfigurations as a series of books, a set of CDs and a 35mm feature of 84 minutes." ?Sight & Sound

"Michael Witt has given us a clear, exhilarating, inspiring presentation of Godard's tour de force, *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, bringing the director's entire body of work into focus in the process. Beautifully written, his study succeeds brilliantly in making Godard's most difficult films and videos comprehensible, tracing their genealogies within the director's career and his points of reference. This is essential reading about digital media's potential to "write history", raising wonderful questions about a committed personal approach to 'cinema history'." ?Janet Bergstrom, Professor of Cinema and Media Studies, UCLA

"Highly recommended." ?Choice

#### About the Author

Michael Witt is Professor of Cinema and Co-Director of the Centre for Research in Film and Audiovisual Cultures at University of Roehampton in London. He is co-editor of several books on French film including Jean-Luc Godard: Documents, The French Cinema Book, and For Ever Godard.

#### Users Review

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