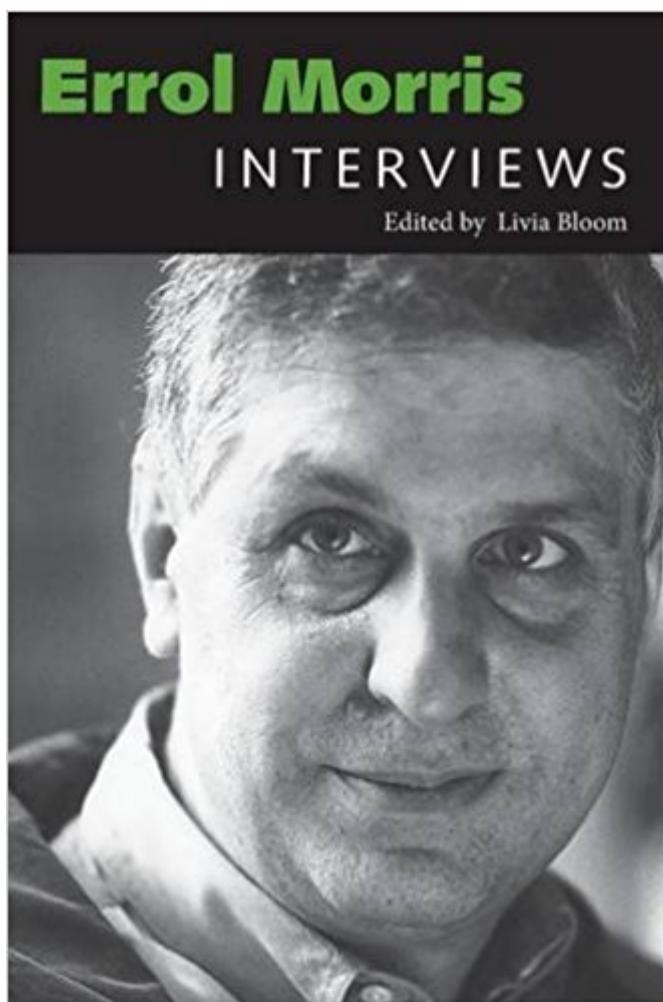


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Errol Morris: Interviews (Conversations With Filmmakers Series)



Synopsis

Errol Morris: Interviews is an irreverent and humorous collection of conversations with the acclaimed documentary filmmaker. Morris (b. 1948) has created some of America's most innovative, lasting cinematic works. Generations of filmmakers, scholars, cinephiles, and film fans turn again and again to such works as *The Thin Blue Line*; *Fast, Cheap and Out of Control*; Academy Award-winner *The Fog of War*; and *Standard Operating Procedure*. Throughout his career--which has included stints as a private eye, film programmer, and commercial director--Morris has honed a unique formal and technical cinematic approach. A Morris film is characterized by intense personal interviews; dramatic re-creations; a haunting, modernist musical atmosphere; and a keen sense of complexity, irony, and black humor. With each new film, Morris challenges and redefines what a documentary can be. This volume features startling interviews from throughout his career, as well as intimate, never-before-published discussions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Interviews with the creator of *The Thin Blue Line*; *Fast, Cheap, and Out of Control*; *The Fog of War*; and *Standard Operating Procedure*

Livia Bloom is a film curator and a contributor to the collection *Imagining Reality: The Faber Book of Documentary*. Her writing is published regularly in *Cinema Scope*.

While not being perfect, this book is nonetheless an extremely interesting collection of interviews and Q & A's with filmmaker Errol Morris. It is clear that Morris is extremely well-spoken and well-read and he provides many interesting tidbits about the making of his films as well as theories and notions about film-making and life in general. The only downside to this book is that it is simply a collection of interviews from throughout his career. So there is a small amount of repetition - you hear some of the same canned responses to questions, but not enough to get in the way of it being a great read. The most valuable section of the book, and indeed Morris's favorite interview, is the most lengthy (if somewhat typo-ridden) interview in the book (66 pages) with Paul Cronin. It made me think that Cronin should continue with this work, and flesh out an entire book on Morris. Also included is a very interesting discussion between Morris and Werner Herzog, both filmmakers being equally difficult to define in the the cinematic lexicon. Overall, a must for any Morris fan.

GOOD BOOK

It's hard to describe why I found this book so valuable, but I read every sentence of every page as if it contained the secrets of the universe. Even the trite questions like "where do you get your ideas?" are answered with great thoughtfulness and profundity. Errol rarely gives a straight answer, but he always gives a provocative one. Before reading this book, I recommend that you look up a couple of his video interviews (e.g., with Charlie Rose or with Herzog) just to give you a sense of the sloth-like pace - i.e., the thoughtfulness - with which he speaks. Here are some selected quotes: I used to transcribe all of my audiotapes by myself and there were these exciting moments where you would become aware of patterns of speech, the way people talk, the way they use language, the way they express themselves, the way they don't express themselves. When you sit and transcribe interviews, you become aware of things that you would never ordinarily notice. As you actually put these words down on the page you're listening to them in a completely different way. How much can you actually learn about a person and how do they communicate just from their patterns of speech? It goes well beyond the surface content of what they're saying. ---Truth is not guaranteed by style or presentation. It's not handed over on a tray like a Happy Meal. It's a quest, and often it's as interesting to chronicle people's persistent avoidance of truth as their pursuit of it. But in any event, whatever truth is, it's a linguistic and not a visual thing. I do not believe that the truth is subjective, that the truth is contextual, or that the truth is up for grabs. To me the real story behind *The Thin Blue Line*--and I think this is an important story to be told in general about the world--is not that the

truth is unknowable but that often people are uninterested in the truth. They don't seek the truth but rather some series of answers that make them feel comfortable or answer to certain needs they might have.---The only way that people can make sense of experience, of the world, of history, is by picking and choosing from a myriad of details and facts.---Stories, by their very nature, have to be tremendously simplified versions of reality. Reality is too complex, it's too chaotic. We tell ourselves stories so we don't have to deal with reality. We create stories out of the mess of reality by eliminating material, by reinterpreting material, by rearranging material. But the investigative element is what connects the stories to the world. It's what makes stories interesting to me.---Perhaps the best thing a film can do is create something that is unusual and unique, that has emotional power, that says something unexpected. My tendency as a filmmaker is to keep going, to keep gnawing at some bone until I finally come to a conclusion that satisfies me.---I love commercials, unreservedly. The haiku of the West. And I like to think of consumerism as the most effective preventative to genocide yet devised. When someone shows up at your door and asks you to hack your neighbor to death with a machete, you're less likely to do it if you have prior plans, say, to go buy a DVD player.---Despite all of our efforts to control things, the world is much, much more powerful and deranged than we are.

This book is helpful if you are interested in knowing what are the intentions of a great documentarian during his film practice. It contains a collection of interviews with the filmmaker (between 1987 and 2009) which were published in well known newspapers and magazines. It also includes a short chronology (events of the life of Errol Morris) and a filmography of the director. Some of the interviews have an introduction which is highly descriptive and sometimes repeatative, unfortunately. During his interviews Morris is mainly very blunt, direct and explicative. Moreover, we learn that this talkative person is also a great orator. If you are interested in the work of EM this is a must read to grasp not only his thoughts but also his feelings in detail. But it would be better to see the films before reading!

This is an essential read for film lovers, artists and documentary fans. But, really, it's perfect for any living, thinking human being. Morris is a sage of our age, and we can learn from him whether we are in the creative field or just alive. Check this out: "We tell ourselves stories so we don't have to deal with reality. We create stories out of the mess of reality by eliminating material, by reinterpreting material, by rearranging material." Right on. Bloom knows her stuff and takes it to the master interviewer in this thoughtful, revelatory book.

even without seeing this director's movies, the interviews stand on their own. yes, there is always a little repetition in interview books where they are often not allowed to shorten an existing interview. i love this umiss series.

A fascinating read. As another reviewer has said, since this is a compilation, there is a fair bit of repetition. But it is still an glimpse into an indiosyncratic and amusing mind, with as much to say about life and truth as about the particular movies.

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