



Empire of Dreams: The Epic Life of Cecil B. DeMille

By Scott Eyman

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The authoritative biography of the legendary director Cecil B. DeMille: “if this were a movie, it would get four stars, two thumbs up, and an A” (*The Dallas Morning News*).

- Hollywood history: Cecil B. DeMille was among the earliest filmmakers who discovered some of the biggest stars in film, including Gloria Swanson, Claudette Colbert, and later, Charlton Heston. DeMille’s greatest successes came with biblical spectacles, notably *The Ten Commandments* and *King of Kings* . When he finally won an Academy Award for best picture with *The Greatest Show on Earth*, he had been making films for forty years.
- A fully realized portrait : DeMille has often been reduced to a caricature: a hack who made empty epic spectacles, a right-winger and McCarthy supporter during the blacklist, and a tyrannical director who abused his actors. Eyman instead presents a balanced account of a remarkably rich life.
- An authoritative biography : Scott Eyman is the first biographer to have access to DeMille’s letters and other personal papers for publication. Eyman settles for nothing less than the real man, as he did in his biographies of John Ford and Louis B. Mayer. The result is a unique history of Hollywood’s earliest years and the rediscovery of a major filmmaker.

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review DeMille wasn't the sole originator of the huger-than-huge Hollywood movie, but he was one of its most successful purveyors. And unlike some silent-film auteurs, DeMille made the change to talkies seamlessly in a career that spanned more than 50 years of stage and screen hits across genres. Aided by access to DeMille family papers unavailable to previous biographers, Eyman, a seasoned biographer of Hollywood heavyweights, undertakes an exhaustive and evenhanded look at DeMille and his oeuvre. Whereas Sidney Lumet thought "DeMille vulgarized everything D. W. Griffith did," Eyman finds that "DeMille was always a populist filmmaker, like Frank Capra," albeit one who "took serious . . . successful flyers at Art." And such flyers he took: his *The Ten Commandments* (1923 and 1956) and *The King of Kings* (1927) are gaudy touchstones of epic filmmaking grandeur and glorifications of conventional Christian values, but he also directed *The Volga Boatman* (1928), "a surprisingly sympathetic account of the Russian Revolution." In his career, DeMille directed a veritable who's who of Hollywood stars and also found time to appear in films as an actor, his best-known role perhaps being as himself in Billy Wilder's 1950 masterpiece, *Sunset Boulevard*. Eyman's sprawling biography fully gives the master his due. --Mike Tribby

About the Author

Scott Eyman has written thirteen books, including biographies of Hollywood legends such as John Wayne (a *New York Times* bestseller), Ernst Lubitsch, Cecil B. DeMille, and Louis B. Mayer. He also collaborated with Robert Wagner on two books. He has written for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. He was formerly books editor of *The Palm Beach Post*. He lives with his wife, Lynn, in West Palm Beach. Follow @ScottEyman1.

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