

The New Criterion

Features

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Elia Kazan: a director's notes

by [John Simon](#)

A look at the brain behind the camera.

Few directors have achieved equally distinguished status in both theater and film. To this select ambidextrous group belongs Elia Kazan, who also proved himself an autobiographer of stature. (We pass over his fiction in silence.) Kazan was, moreover, in the guidance he gave to some of the authors whose works he directed, something very close to a co-author. *Kazan on Directing*, edited by Robert Cornfield, reveals a further talent in the extensive notes he wrote to himself about the works, the characters, and the actors he was dealing with, displaying astute analyses and critical insights couched in clear, sharp, eminently readable prose. [\[1\]](#)

This carefully edited book also includes excerpts from correspondences and interviews, and pertinent quotations from Kazan's other writings as well as from Arthur Miller's and Tennessee Williams's memoirs. It further comprises an ironi ...

John Simon's collections of film, theater, and music criticism are available from Applause.

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