

Definition: **film noir** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Genre of cynical, bleak films, originating in Hollywood during the 1940s and 1950s. Often bathed in gloomy shadows, the ominous mood of the films mirrored the corruption and paralysis of the underworld characters they presented. Influenced by the effects of World War 2, it depicted an uneasy world, lacking ideals or moral absolutes. John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) was the blueprint for other genre classics, such as *The Big Sleep* (1946) and *Touch of Evil* (1958).

Summary Article: **film noir**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Genre of dark, cynical crime film. Thematically indebted to the 'hard-boiled' school of fiction, and stylistically to German expressionism, French poetic realism, and the constraints imposed by B film-making, *film noir* first appeared in Hollywood in the 1940s and 1950s. Examples are *Double Indemnity* (1944) by Billy Wilder and *In a Lonely Place* (1950) by Nicholas Ray.

The classical *film noir* painted a bleak picture of American society. The world of *Out of the Past* (1947, directed by Jacques Tourneur), *The Big Combo* (1955, directed by Joseph H Lewis), and *Touch of Evil* (1958, directed by Orson Welles) was one of eternal night in which the city took on the contours of a modern-day Hades populated by low-lives, corrupt officials, ruthless *femme fatales*, and psychotic gangsters. The pessimistic attitude of these films constituted a significant departure from Hollywood cinema before World War II.

The term *film noir* was originally coined by French film critics, and as it caught on internationally, it prompted a reappraisal of the old films and the emergence of a new wave of 'neo-noirs' such as Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974) and Arthur Penn's *Night Moves* (1975). In the 1990s, wide-screen, colour *noir* became one of the staples of genre cinema; for example, *The Hot Spot* (1990, directed by Dennis Hopper), *Deep Cover* (1992, directed by Bill Duke), *Reservoir Dogs* (1992, directed by Quentin Tarantino), and *The Last Seduction* (1994, directed by John Dahl).

**APA**

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film noir. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/film\\_noir](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/film_noir)

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## Chicago

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## Harvard

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## MLA

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