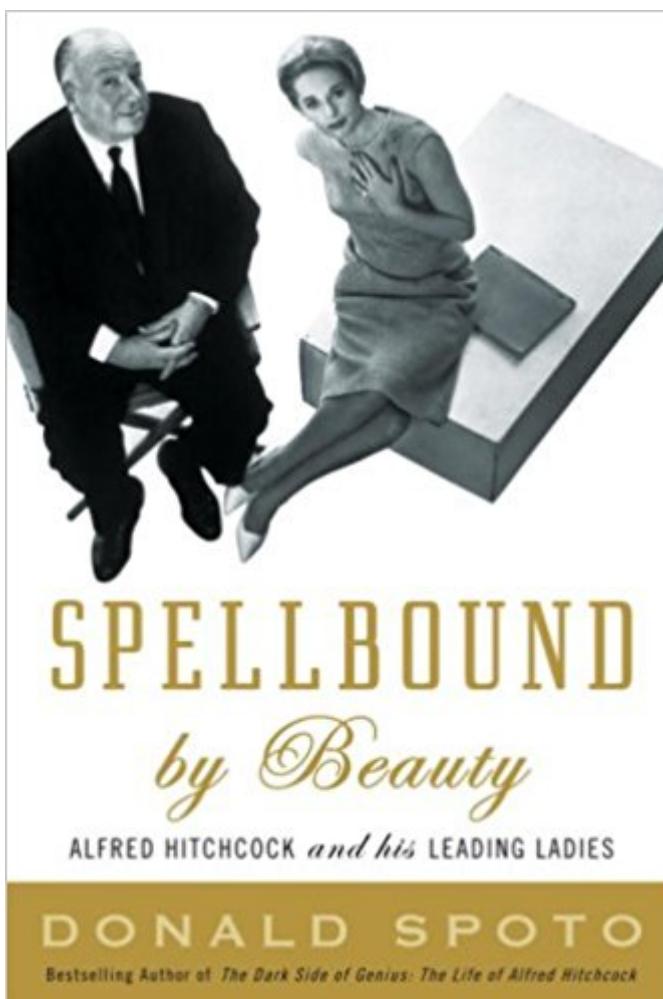


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Spellbound By Beauty: Alfred Hitchcock And His Leading Ladies



Synopsis

“The trouble today is that we don’t torture women enough.” Alfred HitchcockIt is remarkable how infrequently, over a period of more than fifty years, Alfred Hitchcock spoke about the beautiful, legendary and talented actresses he directed. And when he did, his remarks were mostly indifferent and often hostile. But his leading ladies greatly enriched his films, even as many of them achieved international stardom precisely because of their work for Hitchcock among the dozens of women were Madeleine Carroll, Joan Fontaine, Grace Kelly and Tippi Hedren. Yet he maintained a stony, insistent silence about the quality of their performances and their contributions to his art. Spellbound by Beauty—the final volume in master biographer Donald Spoto’s Hitchcock trilogy that began with *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock* and continued with *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock*—is the fascinating, complex and finally tragic story of the great moviemaker and his female stars, the unusual ideas of sex and romance that inform his films and the Hollywood dreams that often became nightmares. Rich with fresh revelations based on previously undisclosed tapes, new interviews, private correspondence and personal papers made available only to the author, this thoughtful, compassionate yet explosive portrait details Hitchcock’s outbursts of cruelty, the shocking humor and the odd amalgam of adoration and contempt that time and again characterized Hitchcock’s obsessive relationships with women—and that also, paradoxically, fed his genius. He insisted, for example, that Madeleine Carroll submit herself to painful physical demands during the making of *The 39 Steps*. He harbored a poignantly unrequited love for Ingrid Bergman. He meticulously and deliberately constructed Grace Kelly’s image. Finally, he stalked, harassed and abused Tippi Hedren. His treatment of his daughter, Pat, was certainly unusual, while his strange marriage to his sometime collaborator Alma Reville was a union that (according to Hitchcock himself) was forever chaste after one incident. Spellbound by Beauty offers important insights into the life of a brilliant, powerful, eccentric and tortured artist, and it corrects a major gap in movie history by paying tribute at last to those extraordinarily talented actresses who gave so much to his films.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In this enthralling third installment of his Hitchcock trilogy (after *The Dark Side of Genius* and *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock*), Spoto paints a portrait of a man as talented as he was troubled. Spoto examines each film in terms of its leading lady, but focuses especially on the three cool blondes with whom Hitchcock was famously obsessed: Ingrid Bergman (*Spellbound*, *Notorious* and *Under Capricorn*), Grace Kelly (*Dial M for Murder*, *Rear Window* and *To Catch a Thief*) and Tippi Hedren (*The Birds* and *Marnie*). While Bergman never returned Hitchcock's romantic advances, the pair struck up a lasting friendship. With Kelly, Hitchcock felt he had molded the young actress into his ideal woman with just the right mix of elegance and sexuality. When Kelly left Hollywood, Hitchcock sought a replacement and found newcomer Tippi Hedren, whom he both fawned over and humiliated during their two films together. Relying on hours of personal interviews with both Hitchcock and his various players, Spoto shines an admiring yet unflinching light on one of the most celebrated directors in history. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Starred Review Spoto's third book about Hitchcock includes material he felt obliged to withhold from his widely praised biography, *The Dark Side of Genius* (1983), in deference to sources who told stories they didn't want repeated while they were alive. It focuses on Hitchcock's sometimes troubled, sometimes perverse, always manipulative relationships with his leading ladies. Some of its revelations are well-known among cinephiles, including Hitchcock's fetish for blonds—so strong that even blond actresses had to have their hair lightened to fit the director's ideal—and his attempts to play Svengali to young, beautiful blonds, especially Grace Kelly and Tippi Hedren, and subsequent frustration when they incompletely submitted to him. But Spoto also brings to light aspects of Hitchcock's life and personality unsuspected and, some of it, unprintable in his lifetime, including overt and

subtle sexual harassment dating as far back as Hitchcock's earliest films, during the production of which he told dirty jokes and pretended to expose himself to actresses to provoke (and film) their shocked reactions. According to Spoto, Hitchcock's perversity increased as he grew older, culminating in his twisted, tragicomic relationship with Hedren. The chapters on his behavior during the filming of *The Birds* and *Marnie* are riveting and deeply troubling, revealing an artist at once losing his touch and losing touch with reality. --Jack Helbig

Both. I found very interesting facts that I didn't know about Hitch (as he asked people to call him and "drop the cock"). Let me just say, that the part of the book about Tippi Hedren in *The Birds* was shocking. Hitch had a sick love/hate for her and a couple of other leading ladies but poor Tippi (innocent and new) got the worst treatment of all. His focus was ALWAYS on the leading ladies,,,never the men. He wanted them blonde, and tortured them in many ways by repetitive shooting of scenes (Tippi's went on for days). This will not gross you out but WOW you will be surprised and hopefully enjoy it like I did.

At least it was in my case. Also, it seems that the author couldn't decide whether to tell us the story of the making of the movies or that of his leading ladies and his relationship with them. It is, though, engaging and well written. I'd recommend it but if it's a matter of choosing between this one and "Dark Side of Genius" I'd definitely go for the latter.

A really great companion book to Hitch "The Dark side of Genius" . Priced right and not too bad to get hold of. A must have for the Hitch fan's out there. My wife really liked it.

Very good as I enjoy books about Hitchcock & fascinated about Actress Tipi Hedren !!

I am enjoying it once it downloaded properly.

I mostly read towards the end of the book as I'm interested in Doris Day, Grace Kelly, and Tippi Hedren. The book states facts I already know about Doris and Grace (and says very minimal about Doris) but says a lot of information about Tippi Hedren. I didn't realize how badly she was treated by Hitchcock until reading this and it's suitable for her to be on the cover of the book. I do recommend reading. I ended up checking out the movie "The Girl" from my local library which was a TV movie of Tippi based upon this book. Excellent movie also.

Hitchcock's obsessions were both fascinating as they related to his films and disturbing. This book highlights both aspects exceedingly well. As a lover of Hitchcock films, this book is a must.

a great read with apparently some pretty solid info. yes, the title lives up...you will be spellbound by the great Hitchcock, the truth behind his legend, and the fascinating pettiness he practiced on some amazing women.

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