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Paul Schrader (Contemporary Film Directors)

George Kouvaros

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As the first full-length study on Paul Schrader's films, this book examines the different styles of his work and the multiple influences on which it draws. A defining feature of Schrader's career is his capacity to engage in a range of collaborations and production contexts while returning to a consistent set of themes, character types, and dramatic scenarios. Going beyond the affirmation of a directorial vision, Schrader creates a cinema driven by issues of obsession, memory, and the difficult nature of experience. Representative of a new generation of American writer-directors of the 1970s, Schrader's films highlight the tension between old and new ways of telling a story and between the maintenance of commercial formulas and openness to individual expression.

George Kouvaros draws on a personal interview conducted with Schrader and the director's prior commentary to trace common motivations and impulses behind such well-known films as *Light Sleeper*, *American Gigolo*, *Affliction*, *Auto Focus*, *Taxi Driver*, and *Patty Hearst*. Kouvaros reads Schrader's films not only in terms of a number of important themes such as male obsession and estrangement, but also in regard to harder to define issues that include melancholia, trauma, and the complex linkages of violence and guilt that bind individuals to places and each other.

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