ForeWord Reviews

Footsteps in the Fog: Alfred Hitchcock's San Francisco

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From *The Birds* to *Psycho*, Hitchcock's films provide masterful portraits of the human psyche confronting psychological terrors and anxieties. Combining dark, mysterious settings with strange, unexplainable occurrences, his movies draw us into creepy realms of self-doubt and despair.

At the same time, according to the authors, Hitchcock's films offer a unique glimpse of the San Francisco area. In their lavishly illustrated study, the authors chronicle in great detail the ways that Hitchcock turned the city by the Bay (or Santa Rosa or Bodega Bay) into movie characters, costarring with Jimmy Stewart, Kim Novak, or Tippi Hedren.

Focusing on three major movies-*Shadow of a Doubt*, *Vertigo*, and *The Birds*-Kraft and Leventhal trace the location of every scene to the spot where it was filmed. *Shadow of a Doubt*, for example, was filmed in Santa Rosa, where the great director used the "Methodist Episcopal Church South, located at Fifth and Orchard Streets. Hitchcock chose this location in part because it was no longer being used as a church, and he would not offend churchgoers." The authors also report that "Universal Studios reportedly used the Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce as a casting office and paid extras $5 a day for their work."

Some of the locations for filming are still standing. In Vertigo, filmed in San Francisco, Gavin Elster and his wife live in a luxurious apartment building called the Brocklebank, located at the corner of Mason and Sacramento Streets, virtually unchanged today.

Other movie landmarks were studio sets that gathered an air of authenticity from real spots in San Francisco. The most famous of these is the Argosy Book Shop, a fictitious store from Vertigo based on an antiquarian shop called the Argonaut Book Shop. When Hitchcock visited the Argonaut, he proclaimed that it looked the way a bookshop ought to look, and he even copied the mannerisms of the bookstore owner in his film.

Hitchcock loved San Francisco because it reminded him of England. He and his family owned a 200-acre estate about an hour south of San Francisco, where they lived for thirty years. The director stocked his cellars with his favorite wines, entertained guests, and patronized his favorite restaurant-Ernie's-during his years in Northern California.

Kraft and Leventhal have lovingly created a tribute to Hitchcock's fondness for the Bay Area just as the filmmaker used his medium to send a love letter to his favorite part of the world.