# **Contents**

Preface ix Acknowledgments xiii

## Part One THE BUSINESS

World Rejects Hollywood Blockbusters!? 3
Live with It! There'll Always Be Movie Sequels. Good Thing, Too. 12
Superheroes for Sale 21
What Won the Weekend? Or, How to Understand Box-Office Figures 34
Snakes, No; Borat, Yes: Not All Internet Publicity Is the Same 39
Don't Knock the Blockbusters 46

# Part Two WRITING ABOUT MOVIES

In Critical Condition 53

Love Isn't All You Need 63

Do Filmmakers Deserve the Last Word? 69

Crix Nix Variety's Tics 78

# Part Three FILM AS ART

But What Kind of Art? 85
This Is Your Brain on Movies, Maybe 96
Movies Still Matter 103

#### Part Four STORYTELLING AND STYLE

Anatomy of the Action Picture 113
Times Go by Turns 126

Grandmaster Flashback 135
Originality and Origin Stories 151
Good Actors Spell Good Acting 155
By Annie Standards 159
Unsteadicam Chronicles 167
Pausing and Chortling: A Tribute to Bob Clampett 177

### Part Five FILMS

A Behemoth from the Dead Zone 185 Cronenberg's Violent Reversals 196 The Movie Looks Back at Us 203 Lessons from Babel 207 Slumdogged by the Past 213 Rat Rapture 229 A Welcome Basterdization 235

Part Six INTO THE FUTURE
New Media and Old Storytelling 249
The Celestial Multiplex 258
Take My Film, Please 269

Index 279