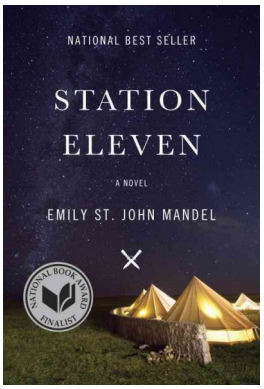
Brandon R.'s blog

Station Eleven



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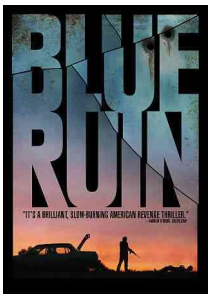
ISBN:
9780385353304

There sure are a lot of books about the End of the World these days; Dystopian novels have been very popular in our rapidly changing present and uncertain future. I would consider this one "literary" fiction, in the sense that the novel isn't really about the genre, but rather uses it as a device that focuses more on its descriptive language and sense of place. This book is set specifically in the Toronto/Great Lakes area as it evokes a sense of wonder about our civilization in its retrospective loss of everything. The story weaves back and forth between several characters before, during, and after an outbreak of "The Georgia Flu" (the Eastern European kind). As any good, modern plague story, airplane travel is quickly identified as the initial means of pandemic. This is not a fast paced, action-driven story (as most of the dystopias I have read), but rather revels in its lack of immediacy. There is no reason to rush, because we have been exposed to the outcome; there is no longer any hustle and bustle of the modern world.

The book jacket suggests this is a cross between Cormac McCarthy and Joan Didion. I can see those inspirations in the author's writing, but it really isn't as blunt or lyrical as either of those great writers. Yet, seeing the comparison in itself is a compliment to the thoughtfulness put into the characters. The story is a bit too disjointed to every really care enough about any particular person, for me, but its detailed authorial observations kept me intrigued throughout (like how gasoline can "go bad" after a certain amount of time or the simple lack of something like a newspaper, in a world without electricity, can break down all institutional communication). The book is less suicide-inducing than The Road and less grief-stricken than The Year of Magical Thinking, but worth a read if you want a well-reviewed book from last year that no longer has a holds waiting list.

For the Love of Reading Information, Answers & Reviews
Posted by Brandon R. on Jun 30, 2015 Add new comment

Blue Ruin



view in catalog
ISBN:
013132612850

Here's one of my favorite American movies I've seen this year. I heard about this while it was making the rounds on the festival circuit last year and finally got a chance to check it out recently. It won the FIPRESCI prize at the Cannes Film Festival last summer (the international critics' prize for best independent feature). While it's worth checking out for the Virgina set cinematography, it is primarily a suspense film about how revenge never goes the way you want it to.
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Posted by Brandon R. on Oct 27, 2014 Add new comment

The Raid 2

view in catalog
ISBN:
043396442023
If you are looking for an action-packed, extremely violent, two-and-a-half hour movie filled with lots of amazing martial arts acrobatics and weapons used in ways that you would never wish on your worst enemy, you should try this out (in either the provided English dubbed or subtitled Indonesian versions). I wouldn't ever recommend watching a sequel before the original, but you don't really have to see the first one (which is almost half as long, but just as good); This one basically starts over where it left off.**Read more »**
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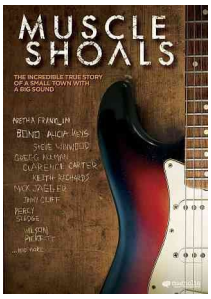
Muscle Shoals



view in catalog

ISBN:

876964006347

Muscle Shoals is great music documentary about the "special sound" that came out of the studio recordings of this small town in Alabama that includes names like Percy Sledge, Aretha Franklin, The Rolling Stones, Lynyrd Skynyrd, and The Allman Brothers (among others). Interviews with the studio musicians, the engineers, and some of the more famous people involved on the bands listed above help tell the story of this great place to make music. I was particularly interested in the story of the session musicians from that town, named "The Swampers" that played behind the varied kinds of musicians that came to record over the years. **Read more »**

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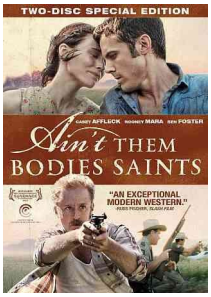
Ain't Them Bodies Saints



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ISBN:

0788617427

I chose to highlight this film, released (and slightly forgotten) last year, because the holds queue has recently run its course. The plot concerns a small-town Texas man who escapes from prison to reunite with his wife and their child he has never seen. If you're looking for a crime picture that is equal parts emotional relationship drama and technical detail period piece (mid 20th century), check this out. The box advertises it as a "modern western", which I suppose it is, in the way a film like Down in the Valley or Lonely Are The Brave (the last "good Western", according to Sam Shepard's *True West*) is. It has a few action scenes, but this film is more Badlands than Bonnie & Clyde. **Read more »**

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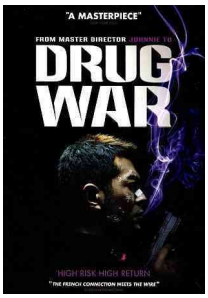
Drug War



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ISBN:
812491014387

If you are looking for a good, modern crime thriller, and are not averse to subtitles, this new Johnnie To movie is definitely worth checking out. A contemporary of filmmakers like John Woo and Tsui Hark, Johnnie To has been known for making good (crime) pictures in China for awhile now, but this new one is a great blend of action and plot. Reviews I have read compare it to Infernal Affairs (which Martin Scorsese's The Departed was based on), though the plot here is not THAT convoluted. **Read more »**

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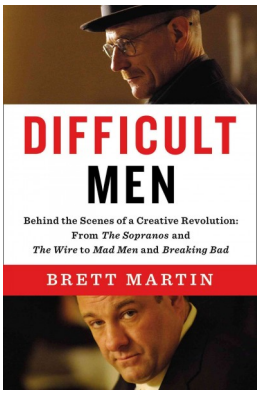
Difficult Men



view in catalog

ISBN:
9781594204197

This is an interesting book detailing the rise of what the author terms the "Third Golden Age of Television". He provides in-depth details on the development, reaction, and impact of several critically acclaimed television shows (The Sopranos, The Wire, Deadwood, Mad Men) and touches on others more peripherally (*The Shield, Six Feet Under, Breaking Bad* and various others). [Note: The Library may not, and probably will not, have the entirety of some of these shows, so check the catalog if you are inclined to (re-)watch any of them]. The author provides a context for how these new shows developed (going back to briefly recap the first two 'ages' on network television) and traces how this third Age was able to come about only on premium and basic cable stations.

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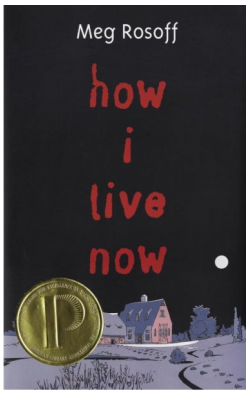
For the Love of Reading Information, Answers & Reviews HBO Nonfiction Television
Posted by Brandon R. on Jan 28, 2014

how i live now



view in catalog
ISBN:
0385746776
If you are looking for an antidote to the Hunger Games mania, as I was this past week, this less-action-oriented Young Adult dystopia might be worth a read. A 2004 Printz Award and British Guardian Children's Fiction Prize winner, the story is written from the perspective of Daisy, a 15 year-old girl from a not-too-distant future set New York City, who is sent to live with her cousins in the English countryside to get away from her father, her unliked stepmother, and their newborn child. Almost as soon as she is there, the country is invaded and war breaks out, leaving Daisy and her cousins to fend for themselves in what can only be said, without spoiling the plot, to be a truly harrowing experience. **Read more »**
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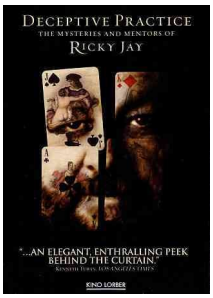
Deceptive practice



view in catalog
ISBN:
738329117429
If you like magic, Deceptive practice: the mysteries and mentors of Ricky Jay is definitely worth checking out. Ricky Jay is one of the most well respected living magicians, a bit of a scholar

when it comes to the history of magic, and a frequent consultant on Hollywood films that deal with magic. You may recognize him as an actor from several movies by David Mamet or Paul Thomas Anderson, if you don't remember his frequent appearances on television (he was the youngest magician to perform a full act on TV in 1953). **Read more »**
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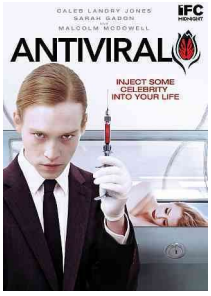
Antiviral



view in catalog
ISBN:
0788616919
Halloween is over, but, of course, that doesn't mean you have to stop watching horror movies. Do you like weird, creepy movies that aren't necessarily traditionally 'scary'? If not, you can skip this one. Antiviral is the debut film of Brandon Cronenberg, the son of Canadian filmmaker David Cronenberg. If you are familiar with the father's work, this one fits right in. If not, he is most well known for what is termed the "body horror" film. **Read more »**
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