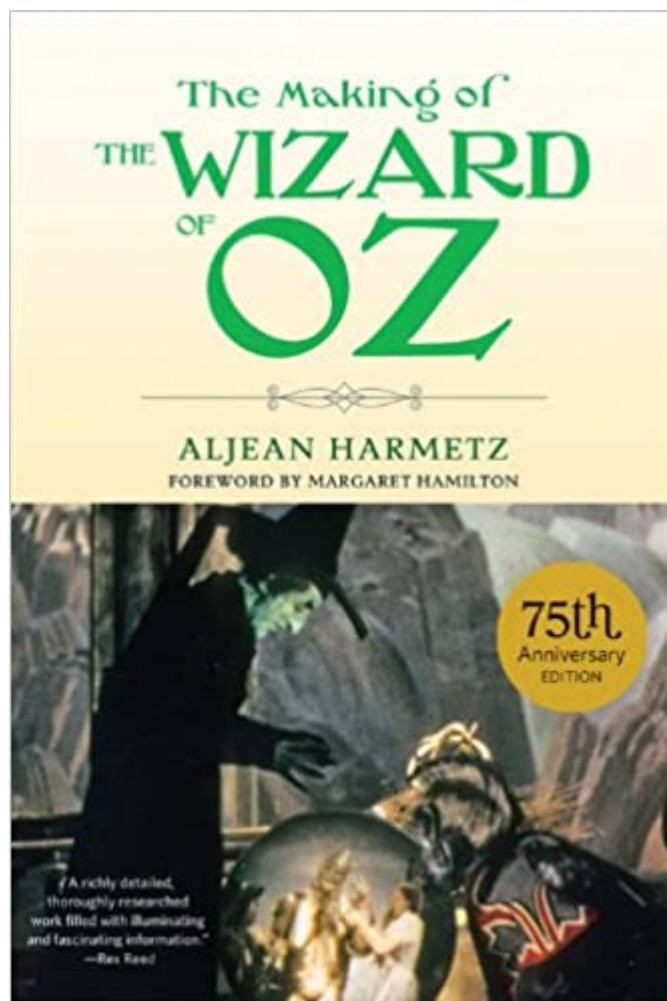


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# The Making Of The Wizard Of Oz



## Synopsis

Released in conjunction with the 75th-anniversary DVD release of *The Wizard of Oz*, this book is the definitive story of how one of America's most beloved movies was made and a marvelous, unprecedented examination of how Hollywood used to make movies. This updated edition includes numerous photos and shares hundreds of interviews with cameramen, screenwriters, costume designers, directors, producers, light technicians, actors, and more to reveal how the factory-like Hollywood system of moviemaking miraculously produced one of the most enduring films ever made. From the scandalous headlines of Munchkin orgies at the Culver City Hotel and the Witch's (accidental) burning to the building of the Emerald City and the sewing of nearly 1,000 costumes, *The Making of The Wizard of Oz* provides a richly detailed re-creation of MGM's production No. 1060 and a detail-by-detail, department-by-department look at the most powerful and flamboyant studio Hollywood has ever known. From the ten scriptwriters at work to the scandal headlines of Munchkin orgies at the Culver City Hotel to the Witch's (accidental) burning, here is the real story of the making of *The Wizard of Oz*. This richly detailed re-creation brings alive a major Hollywood studio and reveals, through hundreds of interviews (with cameramen, screenwriters, costume designers, directors, producers, light technicians, and actors), how the factory-like Hollywood system of moviemaking miraculously produced one of the most enduring and best-loved films ever made. We watch it happen--the bright, idiosyncratic, wildly devoted MGM-ers inventing the lines, the songs; flying hordes of monkeys through the sky; growing a poppy field; building the Emerald City (and 60 other sets); designing and sewing the nearly 1,000 costumes; enduring the pressures from the front office; choosing the actors. Here is Oz, a marvelous, unprecedented experience of studio life as it was lived day by day, detail by detail, department by department, at the most powerful and flamboyant studio Hollywood has ever known--at its moment of greatest power.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“A complete joy...I'd definitely recommend The Making of The Wizard of Oz to both the casual fan and true Oz devotee. • Thrilling Days of Yesteryear

Aljean Harmetz is the author of *The Making of Casablanca*, *On the Road to Tara: The Making of Gone with the Wind*, *Rolling Breaks and Other Movie Business*, and a novel, *Off the Face of the Earth*. She lives in Los Angeles. Margaret Hamilton was an actress best known for her portrayal of the malevolent Miss Almira Gulch and the Wicked Witch of the West in the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*. Aljean Harmetz is the author of *The Making of Casablanca*, *On the Road to Tara: The Making of Gone with the Wind*, *Rolling Breaks and Other Movie Business*, and a novel, *Off the Face of the Earth*. She spent twelve years as the Hollywood and West Coast cultural reporter at the *New York Times*.

It's so great to finally see this book back in print. I bought it when it came out years and years ago. I read and enjoyed the book so much the binding actually fell apart! Can't wait to get this new edition. UPDATE: After checking out this new printing of the book I found that the quality of the print isn't as good as the original. Quite a few of the pages have faded print and the photos are faded too. It's still the best Oz book ever but I wish it was higher quality.

This book covers all aspects of the making of the classic 1939 MGM film and is a must for fans. The first chapter, "The Studio," lays out the setting of MGM and its place as the premiere studio in Hollywood in the 1930s. Subsequent chapters focus on the writers, music composers, directors, actors, Munchkins, behind-the-scenes workers, costumes, special effects, accidents, and the movie's public reception and legacy. The book has info about the smart little Cairn terrier who played Toto too. There is a delightful introduction written by "Wicked Witch" actress Margaret Hamilton for the original 1977 edition, and an appendix that supplies background on L. Frank Baum, author of the bestselling Oz

books, who was pretty much a failure at everything else he did. For most of the actors, working on *The Wizard of Oz* was just a job and a paycheck. There are many first person accounts of the artistry and business plans behind the movie. Actors' personality quirks and rumors about the production are all discussed. The book points out that MGM did not break even financially until the movie was sold to TV networks for repeated airings in the 1950s-80s. It was because of these broadcasts, which were big annual events drawing millions of viewers, that *The Wizard of Oz* became such a huge cultural phenomenon and lodged itself into the hearts and minds of generations of Americans. This is a wonderful book for "Oz" fans and movie lovers in general.

If you are interested in reading about the inner workings of the movie's production and behind the scenes type info about the *Wizard of Oz* movie, then this is not the book you want. Much more time is spent discussing the intricate background and histories of various directors, actors and studio heads, with precious little time spent discussing the actual movie and its production. I will say that when the author does discuss events relative to the movie's production, the info is very interesting. There are several quotes gathered from past interviews of the major actors and others actually involved in the movie which are interesting and the stories provided by Ms. Hamilton are easily the highlight of the book. But to me, the most annoying aspect of the book was the patchwork style in which it was written. The narrative jumps from person to person, from event to event and from date to date with no real rhythm or connection. It often reads like the author simply published the notes she took during her research. For these reasons I was very disappointed with the book overall.

I love learning the backstory behind movies and this book was not a disappointment at all. It was also interesting to learn the author's connection to movies as well. I recommend this book to anyone hungry for more information on the movie "The Wizard of Oz" and the people responsible for making it come alive. Nobody is left out in covering how the movie was made and learning more about the filming. It was very informative and entertaining.

I picked up this book after letting my two-year old daughter watch a few selected parts (mainly Dorothy's arrival into Oz). As I watched her take in these images for the first time, I was struck by the look of wonder and awe on her face. It got me to wondering how this 75 year old film, which holds such timeless appeal generation after generation, was put together. Aljean Harmetz answered that for me, and in far greater detail than I ever thought I'd want, but I read this book in record time.

Margaret Hamilton turns out to be an actress who's demeanor is anything but witchy. Sadly, I was disappointed to read Jack Haley's curmudgeonly view on the movie and its appeal (Jesus, Jack you should be grateful... if not for the Wizard of Oz, why would anyone have heard of you?). I don't want to give away much, but there really is a lot of fascinating facts about how this classic was produced. I'm a lifelong diehard Star Wars fan and I doubt even my favorite movie of all time will hold quite the same appeal as the Wizard of Oz does now in 2012 when it turns 75 (but I hope so, of course).

This book was written when many of the actors from the Wizard of Oz were still alive. It brings insight into the making of the movie that you are unable to get from books written later that don't have the advantage of the author being able to interview actual movie participants. The book is also well written. It's not dry and fact-driven, but very interesting, especially for Oz movie buffs! I highly recommend it.

So much has been written about THE WIZARD OF OZ since its release in 1939 that one would wonder what could be written that wasn't just a rehash. Author Aljean Harmetz has a way of researching and finding new insights into classics. This along with her excellent book ON THE ROAD TO TARA dealing with GONE WITH THE WIND are among my favorite books dealing with film. If you love the film and desire to appreciate what it took to make it come alive on a Technicolor screen then you will find this work very fun to read and worth spending time with. Highly Recommended.

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