

(Free) Shadows of Progress: Documentary Film in Post-War Britain

Shadows of Progress: Documentary Film in Post-War Britain

James Piers Taylor

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Shadows of Progress

DOCUMENTARY FILM IN POST-WAR BRITAIN

Edited by Patrick Russell & James Piers Taylor



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2010-11-15 2010-11-23Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 10.00 x 1.00 x 7.00l, 2.30 #File Name:
1844573222384 pages | File size: 44.Mb

James Piers Taylor : Shadows of Progress: Documentary Film in Post-War Britain before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Shadows of Progress: Documentary Film in Post-War Britain:

Britain emerged from war a changed country, facing new social, industrial and cultural challenges. Its documentary film tradition established in the 1930s and 1940s around legendary figures such as Grierson, Rotha and Jennings continued evolving, utilising technical advances, displaying robust aesthetic concerns, and benefiting from the entry

into the industry of wealthy commercial sponsors. Thousands of films were seen by millions worldwide. Received wisdom has been that British documentary went into swift decline after the war, resurrected only by Free Cinema and the arrival of television documentary. *Shadows of Progress* demolishes these simplistic assumptions, presenting instead a complex and nuanced picture of the sponsored documentary in flux. Patrick Russell and James Piers Taylor explore the reasons for the period's critical neglect, and address the sponsorship, production, distribution and key themes of British documentary. They paint a vivid picture of institutions from public bodies to multinational industries constantly redefining their relationships with film as a form of enlightened public relations. Many of the issues that these films addressed could not be more topical today: the rise of environmentalism; the balance of state and industry, individual and community; a nation and a world travelling from bust to boom and back again. In the second part of the book, contributors from the curatorial and academic world provide career biographies of key film-makers of the period. From Lindsay Anderson's lesser-known early career to neglected film-makers like John Krish, Sarah Erulkar, Eric Marquis and Derrick Knight, a kaleidoscopic picture is built up of the myriad relationships of artist and sponsor.

In future years, this book may be seen as a turning point in documentary study.' - David Rolinson, *Journal of Historical Film, Radio and Television* 'an exhaustive look at the post-war documentary boom' - *The Digital Fix* '...lively, interesting and important.' - *Viewfinder* 'A major addition to the literature on the history of the documentary film, and to the history of British cinema...*Shadows of Progress* brings to wider public and academic attention a category of films that would otherwise be hidden from view. No other book of this scale has been published on the specific topic of British film documentary history in the post-war period, and thanks to its publication there now exists an accessible resource that can both define an area of documentary production, and provide the basis for further study.' - *s in History*

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