



Tough as Nails: The Life and Films of Richard Brooks (Wisconsin Film Studies)

Douglass K. Daniel

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Called “God’s angry man” for his unyielding demands in pursuit of personal and artistic freedom, Oscar-winning filmmaker Richard Brooks brought us some of the mid-twentieth century’s most iconic films, including *Blackboard Jungle*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Elmer Gantry*, *In Cold Blood*, and *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*. “The important thing,” he once remarked, “is to write your story, to make it believable, to make it live.” His own life story has never been fully chronicled, until now.

Tough as Nails: The Life and Films of Richard Brooks restores to importance the career of a prickly iconoclast who sought realism and truth in his films. Douglass K. Daniel explores how the writer-director made it from the slums of Philadelphia to the heights of the Hollywood elite, working with the top stars of the day, among them Humphrey Bogart, Cary Grant, Elizabeth Taylor, Jean Simmons, Sidney Poitier, Sean Connery, Gene Hackman, and Diane Keaton. Brooks dramatized social issues and depicted characters in conflict with their own values, winning an Academy Award for his *Elmer Gantry* screenplay and earning nominations for another seven Oscars for directing and screenwriting.

Tough as Nails offers illuminating insights into Brooks’s life, drawing on unpublished studio memos and documents and interviews from stars and colleagues, including Poitier, director Paul Mazursky, and Simmons, who was married to Brooks for twenty years. Daniel takes readers behind the scenes of Brooks’s major films and sheds light on their making, their compromises, and their common threads. *Tough as Nails* celebrates Brooks’s vision while adding to the critical understanding of his works, their flaws as well as their merits, and depicting the tumults and trends in the life of a man who always kept his own compass.

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