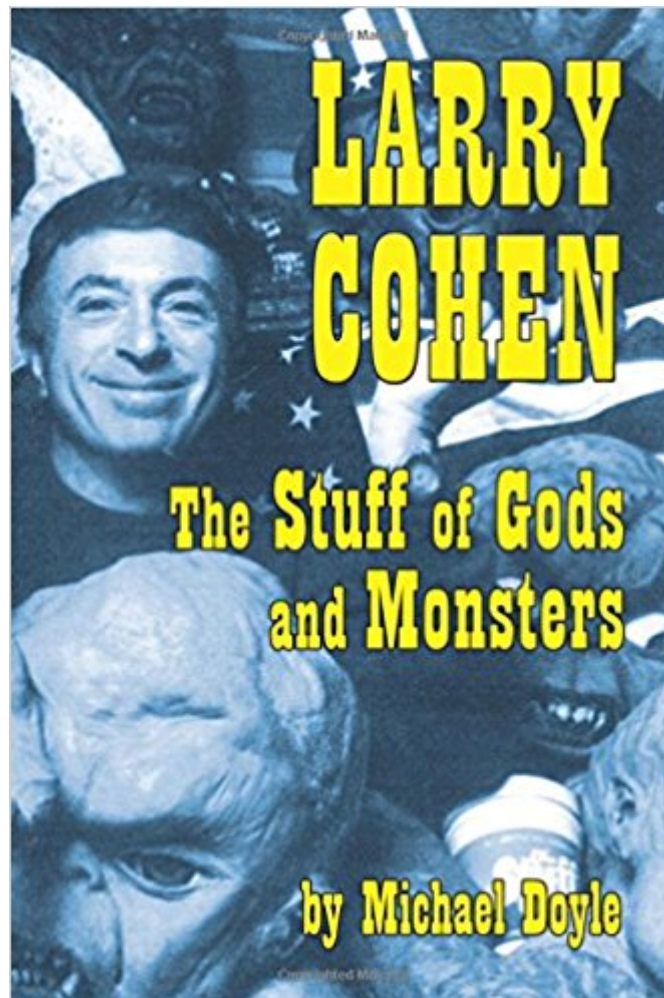




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Larry Cohen: The Stuff Of Gods And Monsters



Synopsis

Larry Cohen: The Stuff of Gods and Monsters traces the extraordinary career of the legendary writer/producer/director responsible for such cult and classic films as *Black Caesar*, *It's Alive*, *God Told Me To*, *The Private Files of J. Edgar Hoover*, *Q - The Winged Serpent*, *The Stuff*, *Maniac Cop*, and *Phone Booth*. Creator of some of the most diverse and thematically rich genre films that have been made in American independent cinema, Cohen's oeuvre has embraced horror, science fiction, thrillers, Westerns, comedies, the biographical film, and blaxploitation gangster movies. At turns provocative, disturbing, and humorous, his distinctly personal works in film, television, and theater are distinguished by their ferocious intelligence, biting satire, and powerful emotionalism. Over the course of 28 chapters, this in-depth career-length interview is an entertaining, enlightening, and gripping account of the singular career of a true American original. "For those of us who love the works of Larry Cohen, this is the most revealing and informative material ever published about him. And if by some chance you don't know about Larry's remarkable career, take this opportunity to learn how one maverick writer/director/producer has been able to survive and flourish in the ever changing madhouse of show biz." -- Joe Dante, director of *The Howling*, *Gremlins* and *The 'Burbs*

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Customer Reviews

I recently received a copy of "Larry Cohen: The Stuff of Gods and Monsters" as a Christmas present and only finished reading it last weekend. I found Michael Doyle's book to be one of the best I have ever read about a filmmaker (and I've read a great many over the years). An entertaining and

thoroughly informative history of a uniquely gifted writer-producer-director, it is so comprehensive that a better title for the book might have been "Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Larry Cohen But Were Afraid To Ask"! As a huge fan of horror and science fiction movies I am somewhat ashamed to admit that I wasn't overly familiar with much of Cohen's nearly 60-year career in cinema and television. I had only previously seen a handful of his films including "It's Alive", "It Lives Again", "Black Caesar", "The Stuff", "Phone Booth", "Maniac Cop", "Q³ The Winged Serpent" and his creepy "Masters of Horror" episode "Pick Me Up". But this mammoth interview book (which is set out as one long Q&A with Cohen that is divided into 28 chapters and spread over 700 pages) has now compelled me to catch up with every other movie I can possibly find by this criminally underrated director. Only yesterday I had a big splurge and purchased DVDs and Blu-rays of "God Told Me To", "The Private Files of J. Edgar Hoover", "Special Effects", "Best Seller" and the first season of "Branded" to sample some more of the works that are discussed at length in Michael Doyle's book. The manner in which Cohen converses so intelligently with Doyle (a talented journalist who has written for horror rags like Rue Morgue and Fangoria) about the making of each of his movies, and the meanings and stories behind them, has made me desperate to see as much as I can. Although I haven't watched the aforementioned works, this did not detract from my enjoyment in reading about them. In fact, it only added to my excitement and enthusiasm for tracking them down. There are so many wonderful stories in "Larry Cohen: The Stuff of Gods and Monsters" that are a delight to read. Cohen is a great talker and comes across like an irrepressible anecdote machine with a strong memory for detail and a wicked assortment of insightful quips and comments. He is endearingly honest about his own career mishaps, but is also quick to defend his work and praise his considerable achievements. This feels somewhat justified when you look back at what has been a truly remarkable (and often tumultuous) career in Hollywood. The man is quite simply a living legend! Although this book is rather pricey (again, it was a Christmas gift so I didn't pay for it myself), it certainly provides value for money and is thicker than a phonebook. I've found myself going back through its pages in recent days, re-reading entire chapters that I enjoyed the first time around. That is not something I usually do and is a testament to how superb this book really is. For that reason alone I heartily recommend "Larry Cohen: The Stuff of Gods and Monsters" to any cineaste and general movie fan, and I award it a stellar rating of 10 out of 10.

Thanks to the generous allowance of pages by Bear Manor Press (unthinkable with most mainstream publishers) Michael Doyle has contributed a detailed and fascinating series of

interviews with this underrated director. With the director's co-operation, he has explored the course of a fascinating career that not only includes his own films but information about the very creative people he has known such as Alfred Hitchcock, Bernard Herrmann, and Samuel Fuller. Cohen's observations on *THE PRIVATE FILES OF J.EDGAR HOOVER* and his reasons why it is a much better film than the major budgeted *J. EDGAR* make this book worthy of reading. If anyone is thinking of just one book present for Christmas this is definitely *THE* one.

A Book Review by Haley EvansIt is a rare and special thing if any writer or journalist succeeds in conducting the definitive interview with a director on one of his or her films. It is rarer still if a writer or journalist is capable of delivering a series of definitive interviews on several of a director's films. As remarkable and unlikely as that may sound, Michael Doyle has succeeded in conducting the definitive interviews on each and every movie ever made by the legendary writer/producer/director Larry Cohen. These interviews are all collected in one huge 700-page volume titled *LARRY COHEN: THE STUFF OF GODS AND MONSTERS*. Each conversation Doyle holds with the veteran filmmaker on his six-decade career in cinema and television is exhaustingly in-depth. In fact, this book is so rich with detail the interviews contained between its covers offer a thorough history and analyses of each Larry Cohen production including *BLACK CAESAR*, *HELL UP IN HARLEM*, *IT'S ALIVE*, *GOD TOLD ME TO*, *THE PRIVATE FILES OF J. EDGAR HOOVER*, *Q: THE WINGED SERPENT*, *THE STUFF*, *A RETURN TO SALEM'S LOT*, *MANIAC COP*, *PHONE BOOTH* and *MASTERS OF HORROR*. Every one of these lengthy Q&As with Cohen is a triumph and the book also accommodates two generous photo galleries, extensive end-notes and a complete filmography. Having previously read interview books on directors such as Howard Hawks, Terry Gilliam, Martin Scorsese, Ken Loach, David Lynch, David Cronenberg and John Sayles, I know they can sometimes be a mixed bag. Naturally, it all depends on the subject as even the best interviewers can be left high and dry by an unresponsive or evasive interviewee. Some directors can even be obstinate or just plain boring in their conversations, but Larry Cohen is none of those things. He is never less than open and eloquent at all times. Indeed, each chapter sparkles with never-before heard anecdotes, fascinating behind-the-scenes stories, insightful observations and Cohen even offers valuable advice for fledgling filmmakers. All of this makes *LARRY COHEN: THE STUFF OF GODS AND MONSTERS* one of the best film books in recent years. It is an essential purchase as well as something that may prove to be an important historical document on one of cinema's true mavericks. This book is not only a gift for the cult director's legions of loyal fans; it is a gift to all lovers of cinema.

This book should be a guide to future would-be interviews on how to ask probing questions that elicit explicit responses. Question and answer interview books often sink or swim based on the interviewer's ability to dig for truth, yet Michael Doyle found Larry Cohen easily met him halfway: the prolific film producer/director all too willingly divulges candid memories of the making of his films. He frankly discusses the trials of shooting so often on a shoestring and the incredibly inventive artifices he and his crews resorted to. The oddities of certain actors, the angst of writing in an industry that treats writers like second-class citizens, and the unvarnished behind the scenes stories all make the book a standout collection of reminiscences.

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