



Have You Seen?
A Personal Introduction to 1,000 Films, by David Thomson (Penguin, £17.99)

The film critic David Thomson is often asked “What should I see?” His answer is this bumper book of films, which includes not just his favourite movies (“enthusiasm is too easy”) but also some he “loathes”, such as the “brain-dead” *Sound of Music*. He’s not so keen on *Doctor Zhivago* either: it “reeks of middlebrow compromise”. Films he loves include Martin Scorsese’s *New York, New York* (“perhaps his finest”), *Chinatown* (“a perfect thriller”) and Robert Aldrich’s “magnificent” noir *Kiss Me Deadly*. Of course, there are surprising absences - *Forbidden Planet*, *Gojira*, *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* - and the lack of an index in a 1,000-page tome is regrettable. But Thomson’s unashamedly personal selection is a joy to read. The creative essence of each film is effortlessly distilled into a mere 600 words. He admits a bias towards the movies of his youth (the 1940s and 50s) and regrets today’s loss of “wonder at films”. Modern cinema often sacrifices “story, character and the innate beauty of the medium” to spectacular effects. An essential resource for sorting the cinematic wheat from the chaff.

PD Smith