
Abstract
With reference to British feature films about the Second World War, the received wisdom among film historians has been that in the immediate aftermath of the conflict film-makers and audiences no longer had an appetite for the subject of war. The perceived dearth of war-related films in the first five or so years of the peace is seen as representing a gap in the production of war films between those made during the war itself and the boom in war film production that got under way from the early fifties. This thesis establishes that such an assumption is mistaken, and that a considerable body of war and aftermath films were made, screened and enjoyed by audiences. The argument, then, is that far from ignoring the war in the late forties, as has been assumed, the film industry was actively involved in the cultural process of re-interpreting the experience and its consequences. The second theme of the thesis is an analysis of these films, and an exploration of how they projected the war and its aftermath to contemporary audiences, and why particular perspectives, subject interests, underlying values and preoccupations emerged. A multi-faceted body of films, they are shown to engage with the shifting concerns and preoccupations of a population emerging from war, and to be a distinctive phase in the cinematic history of the conflict.

Authors
Guy, Stephen

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The Aftermath of World War II was the beginning of a new era. It was defined by the decline of the old great powers and the rise of two superpowers; the Soviet Union (USSR) and the United States of America (US) creating a bipolar world. Temporarily allied during World War II, the US and the USSR became competitors on the world stage and engaged in what became known as the Cold War, so called because it never boiled over into open war between the two powers but was focused on espionage, political