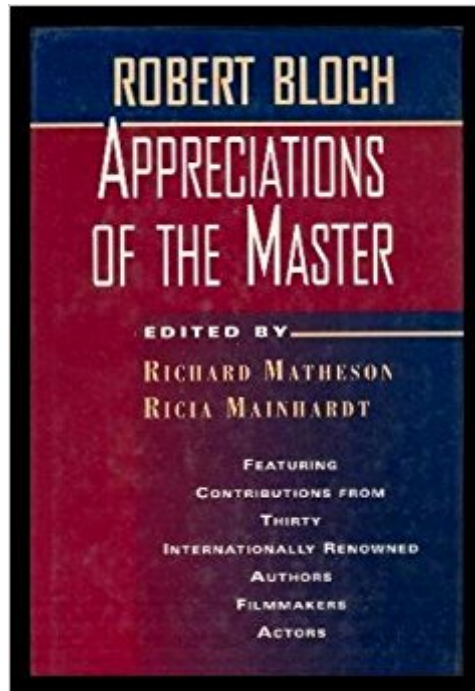




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Robert Bloch: Appreciations Of The Master



Synopsis

A collection of essays, personal reminiscences, and reflections on the work of the horror writer by John Carpenter, Stephen King, Peter Straub, and others whom he influenced includes selections of Bloch's own work.

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Customer Reviews

In a Festschrift for the horror writer best known for the novel *Psycho*, 30 friends and colleagues offer warm tributes and 20 of Bloch's writings complete the volume. The 20, each introduced by one of the tribute-bearers, include some of Bloch's most famous, such as "That Hell-Bound Train," "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper," and "I Do Not Love Thee, Doctor Fell" ; less-renowned ones, like "The Pin" and "The Pied Piper Fights the Gestapo" ; and part of a never-produced screenplay about science fictionists Gordon Dickson and Poul Anderson's Hokas, a race of anarchic teddy bears. The tributes are full of affectionate memories, and their authors constitute a who's who of modern sf and horror writers. In all, a good selection of Bloch's stories accompanied by plenty of good feelings about a lovable man. Roland Green

Tributes to and fiction by horror writer Robert Bloch are compiled in an excellent anthology which profiles contributions for thirty renowned authors influenced by Bloch. These sometimes-personal reflections supplement Bloch's own fine short fiction pieces in a commemorative collection which will especially attract new Bloch fans. -- Midwest Book Review

Robert Bloch: Appreciations of the Master is a wonderful tribute to a top writer, combining fond reminiscences from Bloch's friends and peers with several of the stories that won him his well deserved reputation as one of the top genre writers of the last century. I recommend you read this book along with Bloch's charming autobiography, *Once Around the Bloch*. Together, they serve as a reminder of the great loss the horror, mystery and suspense genres suffered when Bloch passed away.

Robert Bloch: Appreciations of the Master Edited By Richard Matheson and Ricia Mainhardt TOR Books, 1995, 382 pp.; \$24.95 (hc) Review by Scott David Briggs Although Robert Bloch: Appreciations of the Master has been in release for some time, it is certainly a volume that should not go unnoticed, just as its subject should not, and will not, go unremembered, and thus this review. I only met Robert Bloch once, at the first NecronomiCon in August, 1992, a convention held (at the time) near Salem, Massachusetts, honoring all things Lovecraftian and those personalities who have carried on the Lovecraftian tradition in their respective fields, be it fiction, literary, criticism, art, etc. Bloch was Guest of Honor that year, along with artist Gahan Wilson. At one point, Marc Michaud of Necronomicon Press (and a convention organizer) asked me at one point if I wanted to come help escort Mr. Bloch from his hotel suite to one of his autograph sessions, and I eagerly agreed. I was able to speak with Bloch for only a few minutes (and I was probably tongue-tied from meeting a living legend and an idol of mine as well), but in that brief time I realized that all the tributes in this recent book are accurate; Bloch was one of the sweetest, most gracious authors in this field, or indeed, any field. His enviable body of work stands well on its own, and this loving tribute, assembled by author Richard Matheson and Bloch's agent, Ricia Mainhardt, ably serves to demonstrate his immeasurable importance and influence. Matheson and Mainhardt have gathered some of the most famous names in the Horror/Fantasy/Science Fiction field to honor the late Robert Bloch, who passed away in Fall 1994, bringing to a close a creative career which had spanned well over sixty years. Such luminaries as Stephen King, Peter Straub, Arthur C. Clarke, Harlan Ellison, Christopher Lee, Ray Bradbury, and Ramsey Campbell speak at length here about their idol (and, in some cases, mentor) Bloch, and how and why the man came to be such an important influence upon their own careers, and unquestionably the Fantasy/Horror/Suspense fields as a whole. Such relative newcomers as film/television director Mick Garris, artist/writer Neil Gaiman, and horror critic/author Douglas E. Winter round out the impressive list, demonstrating that Bloch's touch extends far beyond the so-called Golden Age into the present. This tribute volume also serves as an invaluable coda of sorts to Bloch's delightful autobiography, *Once Around the Bloch*, published only

a few years ago. While the majority of these recent tribute books are hastily thrown together, shoddily edited affairs, intended merely to generate cash from the reputation of the person or persons being honored, *Appreciations of the Master* cannot, happily, be said to be in this regrettable category. As the tribute volume becomes an ever more common marketing category for publishers, so does the overall value of such books decrease, given the overkill of hundreds of them flooding an already saturated market. This is truly one of the most valuable tribute volumes, full not only of heartfelt, insightful, informative testimonials, but also of a generous assortment of some of Bloch's best short fiction, chosen by many of those paying homage to the author. Any collection of Bloch's that includes "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" or "Notebook Found in a Deserted House" has to be good, even if, it must be confessed, the fairly hokey Lovecraftian "it's at the window!" ending seems dated and unbelievable now. It is conceivable that many of Bloch's fans that know only his novels (including his most well-known, *Psycho*) aren't as familiar with his masterful short fiction, and they could certainly do worse than to start off with this collection, and then proceed to the recent five-volume edition of Bloch's short fiction, published several years ago by Citadel Press. One delightful new surprise to be found here is a rare non-fiction essay of Bloch's entitled "The Clown at Midnight," in which the author, penning this particular essay in the early 1960s, explains just why he feels that most modern horror films miss that mark of terror which many of the classic ones never do, and Bloch's best fiction almost never does either. The essay makes fascinating reading even if you've never read Bloch's work before at all, or you violently disagree with his conclusions. I'm not sure if Harlan Ellison would agree with this assessment, but it seemed to this reviewer upon finishing Bloch's essay that much of the raw material for Ellison's nonfiction career can be glimpsed in what Bloch accomplishes here; that Ellison himself is present in this volume suggests such an influence even more strongly. "The Clown at Midnight" is startlingly pertinent to the lamentable state of the horror/suspense film from the 1960s through today; it is hard to believe that the essay itself is over thirty years old. Bloch rejects most modern horror films, finding them long on blood and gore, and short on character, plot, and scares that aren't merely shock effects. This essay should be required reading for all now and future horror film directors, including (one almost regrets to mention) Mick Garris, included ironically in this volume, and director of several lackluster, none-too-frightening Stephen King miniseries'. Garris' admiration of Bloch is unquestionable, but his own work could surely use a lesson or two from Bloch's own career. Many of the personal tributes included with the volume are illuminating, and some are downright unique, especially the one from Peter Straub in which he describes how, as a young aspiring horror author growing up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he used to delight in watching Bloch on early television in the 1950s, on a

show entitled "It's A Draw." Straub doesn't go into detail about the contents or subject matter of the show, or even Bloch's role in it, but it's clear that Straub recalls the show (and Bloch's appearance on it) with great affection. That Straub has evolved into one of our most highly-regarded modern masters of horror fiction puts such a synchronicitous event as this in a whole new light. It's unusual that Straub's first exposure to Bloch's work was as host of a television show, but the fact that Bloch made an impression with every aspect of his creative energies, whether it was his writing, screenwriting, acting, is simply astonishing. The ultimate value of *Appreciations of the Master* is that it doesn't neglect Bloch's widely heralded gift for humor, as well as his better-known gift for suspense and terror. His infectious sense of humor is the thing that most people who knew him treasure him for, and it is almost certainly the primary quality that Bloch himself would have liked us to remember him for, most of all.

I just want to say that if you like King, Poe, Christie, and Hitchcock, then BUY THIS BOOK!

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