

The *Big Sleep*: Marlowe and Vivian practising kissing; General Sternwood shivering in a hothouse full of orchids; a screenplay, co-written by Faulkner, famously mysterious and difficult to solve. Released in 1946, Howard Hawks' adaptation of Raymond Chandler reunited Bogart and Bacall and gave them two of their most famous roles. The mercurial but ever-manipulative Hawks dredged humour and happiness out of film noir. 'Give him a story about more murders than anyone can keep up with, or explain,' David Thomson writes, 'and somehow he made a paradise.'

When it was first shown, to a military audience, *The Big Sleep* was coldly received. So, as Thomson reveals, Hawks shot extra scenes, 'fun' scenes, to replace one in which the film's murders had been explained, and in so doing left the plot unresolved. If this was accidental, Thomson argues, it also signalled a change in the nature of the Hollywood cinema: '*The Big Sleep* inaugurates a post-modern, camp, satirical view of movies being about other movies that extends to the New Wave and *Pulp Fiction*.'

David Thomson is the author of, among other books, *The Biographical Dictionary of Film* and *Rosebud*, a biography of Orson Welles.

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THE BIG SLEEP DAVID THOMSON



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