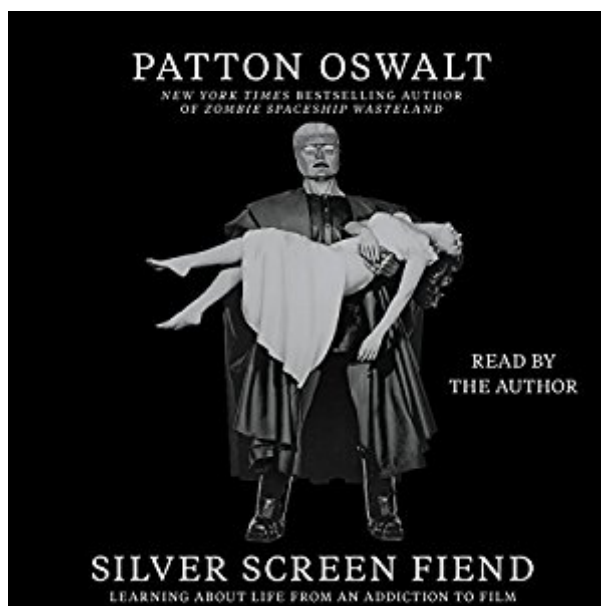


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# Silver Screen Fiend: Learning About Life From An Addiction To Film



## Synopsis

New York Times best-selling author, comedian, and actor Patton Oswalt shares his entertaining memoir about coming of age as a performer and writer in the late '90s while obsessively watching classic films at the legendary New Beverly Cinema in Los Angeles. Between 1995 and 1999, Patton Oswalt lived with an unshakeable addiction. It wasn't drugs, alcohol, or sex. It was film. After moving to L.A., Oswalt became a huge film buff, absorbing classics and new releases at least three nights a week at the New Beverly Cinema. Silver screen celluloid became Patton's life schoolbook, informing his notions of acting, writing, comedy, and relationships. Set in the nascent days of the alternative comedy scene, Oswalt's memoir chronicles his journey from fledgling stand-up comedian to self-assured sitcom actor, with the colorful New Beverly collective supporting him all along the way. Ideally timed for awards season, when everyone's mind is on Hollywood, *Silver Screen Fiend* follows up on the terrific reception of Oswalt's New York Times best-selling debut, *Zombie Spaceship Wasteland*. Already a beloved fixture on the comedy stage, on television, and in film - not to mention his 1.1 million Twitter followers - Oswalt announces, with this second book, that he's also here to stay on the page.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 4 hours 7 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Audio

Audible.com Release Date: January 6, 2015

Language: English

ASIN: B00QVZA8QY

Best Sellers Rank: #114 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Arts & Entertainment > Performing Arts #127 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Humor > Comedy #226 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Entertainers & Celebrities

## Customer Reviews

Not your garden variety celeb tell-all memoir about addiction, Patton Oswalt's *Silver Screen Fiend* tells about his crippling addiction to film. As an ex-sprocket fiend myself, I loved reading about someone who considered seeing five films in a day normal. Oswalt's second memoir (haven't read his first, *Zombie Spaceship Wasteland*) uses a structure of several Night Cafés

moments—instances of revelation; figurative (and literal) rooms one enters and leave a changed man. From seeing *Nosferatu* (1922) at five years old in a library run by idiots, to making one comedian laugh during his first abysmal five-minute set at a comedy club, to bombing in a room full of comics and wanting to be an artist, to visiting the New Beverly Cinema and wanting to be a director! The book is a quick read but don't expect a lot of jokes—this isn't your garden variety comedian's memoir either. There are a lot of references to both cult films and classics (I'm gonna try to cue up a specific scene from *Apollo 13*) with some tame looks behind the curtain that is Hollywood/TV (stories from the set of *Down Periscope* or the pilot taping of *The King of Queens*) but nothing too shocking (one chapter is written about a comedian I'd like to see more of—his style sounds intriguing—but the chapter uses a pseudonym because he kinda comes across as "Misguided" (p. 146).) The novel did make me miss the years where I saw over 200 films in theaters (not counting movies on TV or DVD) which is probably the exact opposite feeling Oswald would want to create in his readers. His fifth Night Café was the birth of his daughter. No longer does he want to waste time in "flickering movie temple[s]" when "the wide-angle world" (p. 185) has so much more, but I suppose I haven't completely squashed that sprocket fiend demon living in my head... Thirty-four pages (over 15% of the book!) are dedicated to listing every film he watched over the main 4 years he wrote about. I skimmed these pages looking for a few notes written in certain sections, but seriously, what a waste of ink. Another 12 pages in the one epilogue are dedicated to a fictional, beyond-the-grave film festival he created for a friend who passed away in 2007. It was fun to read about these films that never were and imagine what could have been and the section reminded me about how awesome *Flicker* by Theodore Roszak was. Overall, it was a decent read but felt like it was quickly put together with a lot of filler to make a certain page or word count...

Patton Oswald's wit and catholic knowledge of American entertainment culture ooze out of every sentence in this fun book. He handles his story of breaking into comedy and his descent into film addiction with clarity and insight that isn't lost among the jokes and references. The major complaint I have about this book is its deceptive length and price. When the story and epilogue end, you'll notice your Kindle telling you you've only read about 65% of the content of your e-book. However, what remains is simply a long, exhaustive list of all the movies Oswald watched during the years covered by the book. It takes up the balance of the page count and inflates the overall apparent "value" of the purchase price. You don't get a 300-page book here, folks. It's much shorter but padded with extras that won't add to the story for anyone but the reader who seeks to re-create

Oswald's binge watching film-for-film.

I really didn't know what to expect from this book. I read his first book and loved it, but I wasn't expecting another memoir. That's really what this book is, a memoir of his obsession with movies. I guess the title should have clued me in. It took a bit but as I understood better where he was going with this book I began to really enjoyed. I loved his retelling of the Karate Kid. It alone makes any price you paid for this book worth it. So does the short story included about the vampire couple. Perhaps what I'm getting at is that maybe Patton should tackle fiction in his next book.

Patton Oswald's second memoir, *SILVER SCREEN FIEND*, is a story of addiction, but not an addiction in the traditional sense. From 1995 to 1999 Oswald had an addiction to movies, spending several nights a week at LA's many retro houses, but especially the New Beverly, which offered double bills each night, from *SUNSET BOULEVARD/ACE IN THE HOLE* to *MAD MAX/DEATH RACE 2000*. From a personal standpoint I think this would be heaven if retro houses are non-existent in most cities, and even in New York there are only a few, and they certainly don't have the cinematic range that the New Beverly offers. During this time, Oswald continues to develop his chops at comedy palaces around LA, especially Largo, which any podcast fan knows is the alt-club HQ for most of today's brightest comics. Oswald details his transition from Virginia to San Francisco and on to LA, learning from other comics and working the craft. There is a neat chapter on *THE DAY THE CLOWN DIED*, an infamous never-seen Jerry Lewis film. Oswald gets a copy of the script and has a live reading with the likes of David Cross, Paul F. Tompkins and Bob Odenkirk weekly at a local venue, until a surprising cease and desist gets handed to him. Still, this is a book about addiction, and while movies are more benign than heroin or Wild Turkey, nonetheless Oswald outlines what this addiction did for him and how his life was affected. Since this book goes until 1999, Oswald has many many more books left; an entire book could be written about his performances in *BIG FAN* and *YOUNG ADULT*. Books have been written about the 1970s-80s comics, like the *LAUGH FACTORY* stars and those who get "called over to Johnny," that fans we need a history of the alt-comedy scene, of which Patton is one of the original founders.

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