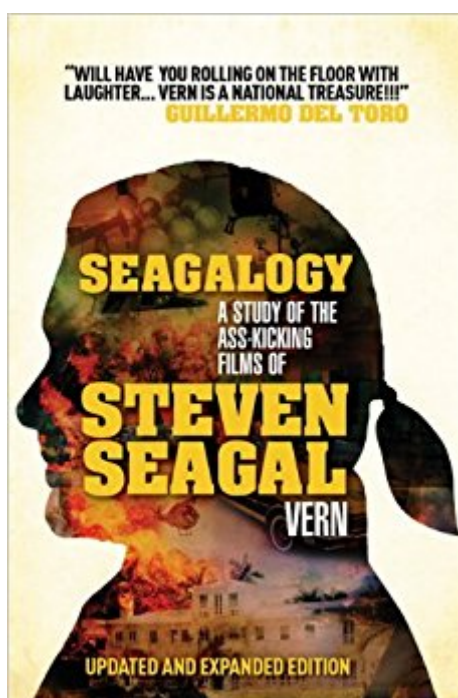


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Seagalogy (Updated And Expanded Edition): A Study Of The Ass-Kicking Films Of Steven Seagal



Synopsis

Vern, the self-styled 'outlaw film critic' is described by Hellboy director Guillermo Del Toro as "equal parts *Hell's Angels* and *Pauline Kael*... a national treasure!" Now Vern unleashes his magnum opus: an in-depth study of the world's only aikido instructor turned movie star/director/writer/blues guitarist/energy drink inventor, the ass-kicking auteur Steven Seagal. "A book that'll shake the very foundations of film criticism, break their wrists and then throw them through a window."

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Customer Reviews

"Equal parts *Hell's Angels* and *Pauline Kael*, Vern is a National Treasure!!!" - Guillermo Del Toro "Film criticism genuinely gets no better than this. I would be jealous if I didn't enjoy reading him so damn much" - Ain't It Cool News "We can't believe this actually exists, but the world is certainly a better place for it." - New York Magazine "Uproariously funny... the film book I never knew I always wanted to read." - nerve.com "Seagalogy is a raucous, thigh-slapping and informative read that can murder spare time as easily as Steven Seagal can break peoples' necks. In short Vern's Seagalogy is an unexpected gem." - mania.com "With the obsession of a fan and the authoritative tone of a professor, Vern takes us through every film with attention to plot, themes, dialogue, influences and even politics..." - denofgeek.com "Seagalogy not only made me laugh my ass off, but sent me to buy some of the early Seagal DVDs I didn't already own. This book is an instant

cult - classic." - Bookgasm

The writer known only as Vern is loved for his unorthodox reviewing style and his expertise in "the films of Badass Cinema." His review of the slasher movie *Chaos* earned him a wrestling challenge from its director; his explosive essay on the PG-13 rating of *Live Free or Die Hard* prompted Bruce Willis himself to walk barefoot across the broken glass of movie message boards to respond.

You might think you have no interest in reading a study of the films of Steven Seagal. I was once like you, going about my merry way as if I did not have a huge hole in my life that this book would one day fill for me. Then a friend lent me this book, and I had no intention of reading it. I figured I'd hang on to it for a week and then return it. Fortunately for me and for the world, I opened it up and was hooked immediately. Vern, the writer, is a one of a kind, a man who can guide you through your own life with both great sincerity and what I would call unparalleled comedic timing. This book is for you whether you know it or not. It is a delightful bubble bath for your soul.

Trying to review something as singular and entertaining as Vern's "Seagalogy" is a task that's almost beyond me, which is why I've idled this task even though I've owned the previous edition of the book for a couple of years. Reviewing books isn't my forte to begin with, and the idea of trying to justify the five-star rating I felt it deserved was tricky - I mean, how many times can I just say "it's great" in a review? By a turn of events, this updated and expanded version allows me to even things out with some criticism; it's still the definitive edition of Vern's work and definitely the one you should buy, but there are some definite disappointments here. Nevertheless, any literate fan of Steven Seagal would be amiss not to own this - an in-depth, intelligent look at his films and how they connect with each other and their star's ideals. Vern's agenda is to prove his theory of Seagal being an auteur - a filmmaker whose body of work retains a personal imprint and distinct style. Seagal has only ever personally directed one film throughout his career, but Vern points out the reoccurring themes and motifs that keep popping up throughout his movies: some of them are superficial features like bar fights and returning actors, but the more important (and more expounded upon) ones include the consistency of political foregrounds and recurring storyline/character traits. Vern points out Seagal's uniqueness for this persistence of personal style, claiming it would have been impossible to write such a book for Van Damme or Chuck Norris. This takes the criticism that many detractors have leveled against Seagal ("All his movies are the same") and turns it on its head.

"Seagalogy" is such a sound theory that it never feels like Vern is finagling his points, and it makes even a fan like me look at the films in a new light. This is the book's power: it more or less forces you to reconsider Seagal's movies from the ground up, both the ones you liked and the ones you hated. Vern offers insight that is virtually unmatched in other reviews. In some cases, he's managed to unearth the original scripts and compares them to the finished products, and in other cases has managed interviews with the producer or director of a specific film. In the case of *Kill Switch*, he's even seen a working print of the film and points out what was altered in post-production (quite a bit). Even when he has no such aid, the author has an incredibly keen eye for detail that even I haven't noticed, revealing that he continued to pay attention even during films others fell asleep while watching. Particularly his appraisals of Seagal's lower-budget work are interesting for his ability to put details together and make sense of things where others have long given up. I mean, remember *Out for a Kill?* - read the chapter on that one, watch the film again, and tell me that you didn't have a better time. Vern even covers non-film-related work of Seagal, including his music CDs and energy drinks. He's added to these sections since the last edition, but I was more excited about the new films he was going to analyze, having stopped previously at *Pistol Whipped*. I really wanted to read the same in-depth analyses of pictures I had seen just as they had come out. This, sadly, is where the disappointment came in: I'm pretty sure that Vern's main reason for updating his book was to write his complete take on Seagal's *Lawman* TV series, and next to this 18-page super chapter, the other new parts are kind of short and dry. All previously-written chapters average between twelve and nine pages in length, whereas the average of the new ones - minus the "Lawman" entry - is about seven. Of particular disdain to me was that Vern seems all but completely uninterested in Seagal's first theatrical role in a decade, *Machete*. I'm glad he addressed the new stuff, but most of these chapters aren't adhering to the rest of the book's standard. Regardless, it's still a very readable book, and surprisingly tolerable considering the amount of opinion in it. Vern doesn't come across as an obsessed fanboy. Maybe as someone with too much time on his hands, but it really seems like he just wants to share the awesome things he's found out about Steven Seagal. And believe it, I truly think this book could convert non-fans. Maybe not devoted ones (who won't appreciate that Vern glosses over standing criticisms against Seagal, like his weight and physical imperviousness), but I think it'd bring intrigue to what unassuming folks presume to be basic action movies. Nevertheless, even if only diehard fans like me read the book, it's going to get the appreciation it deserves, as it's impossible to downplay its quality. An entertaining (if slightly inconsistent) read from start to finish, this book belongs in the hands of anyone who's shown interest in the Buddhist Bonecrusher.

Loads of fun info on Steve. Obviously well researched; a definite treasure for fans.

It's hard to explain Seagal's appeal to those who don't intuitively grasp it. Even when Seagal was at the peak of his career, a lot of people couldn't figure out what his appeal was. He's too tall and lanky, for starters: your typical action star is between 5'7" and 5'10"; Seagal is 6'4". Seagal is reasonably good looking but has a sort of pinched, constipated look about him. He often dresses strangely, and even in 1988 his pony tail wasn't exactly the height of fashion. He looks like a complete dork when he runs, and frankly he often comes across as something of an asshole on screen. And then there's his offscreen persona, which could safely be described as "colorful." I think Seagal's appeal has to do with the sheer force of his personality. It's hard to be neutral about Steven Seagal. When I watch a Tom Cruise movie, the fact that Tom Cruise is kind of an asshole is always there in the back of my head, along with the fact that Tom Cruise is actually only four feet tall. But if Cruise is playing a nice guy and standing on a box, I can still enjoy the movie. With Seagal, on the other hand, it's all up there on the screen. You can see his assholeishness. You sit there watching this guy with a ponytail wearing some kind of silk robe with dragons on it beating the s*** out of some random hoodlum on the street whose biggest crime was probably selling stolen stereos on a street corner, and you think, wow, this guy is an asshole. There's a scene in *Marked for Death* where Seagal tells a doctor who is treating his injured friend to treat her "like the President of the United States." The doctor protests that all of his patients receive the same excellent care, but Seagal is having none of it. "Like the President of the United States," he growls again, jabbing his finger at the doctor. And you can't help feeling a little bad for the doctor. Somehow, through the sheer force of his assholeishness, Seagal has made you forget completely about the half-dead girl the doctor is supposed to be treating and caused you to focus on the poor doctor who just wet his pants because he thinks Steven Seagal is going to break his arms (breaking arms is sort of a trademark of Seagal's). If it were any other actor in Seagal's role, it would have been a completely different scene. In fact, I don't know of any scene like it in any other movie. It's pure Seagal. I used to think these performances arose from Seagal's complete lack of self-awareness: that is, I thought that he was such an asshole that he has no idea that when he tries to act sympathetic, he comes across as just a bigger asshole. But the more I think about the matter and study Seagal's performances (and his offscreen life), the more I think that he possesses a kind of hyper-awareness that causes him to come across as an asshole, and that he was deliberately acting like an asshole trying to act sympathetic in order to make the scene more

interesting. To put it more simply, maybe Steven Seagal is a character Steven Seagal is playing. It's these sorts of conundrums that the mononymous Vern explores in *Seagalogy: The Ass-Kicking Films of Steven Seagal*. For example, in *Hard to Kill*, the bad guy is a Senator named Trent, whose catch phrase is "You can take that to the bank." When Seagal's character realizes that Trent is responsible for the death of his wife, Seagal vows, "I'm gonna take you to the bank, Senator Trent. TO THE BLOOD BANK." Vern writes: [The line is] delivered with such sincerity that I don't even know anymore if it's so bad it's good or so good it's awesome. It's like on the old video games, if the score got high enough it would just flip back over to zero and start over. That might be what happened when he said that line in *Hard to Kill* -- it was so bad that it flipped over and became great. Or maybe it's the other way around. I don't know but the point is, I wish I said that s*** to somebody. That was great. Good job Seagal. Vern's writing, like Seagal's performances, is either so bad it's good or so good it's awesome. He has a rambling, conversational, completely un-pretentious style that occasionally sneaks up on you and, Seagal-like, snaps your funny bone, leaving you screaming on the floor. At the nadir of his career Seagal made a string of movies that are as close to being unwatchable as any movie can be, and I have to salute Vern for sitting through every one of them -- most of them multiple times. Occasionally Vern's commentary on these movies reminded me of Art Bell talking to some conspiracy theory lunatic on his radio show, *Coast to Coast*. The caller would be going on about the Roswell aliens scheming to fluoridate our water supply or something and Art Bell would just calmly interject comments and ask follow-up questions as if the guy was making perfect sense. Anybody else would be yelling, "Holy crap, are you even listening to yourself? Do you have any idea how crazy you sound?" But Art Bell knew the secret of his show was treating all of the nonsense with utter seriousness. In a similar vein, here's Vern commenting on the movie *Attack Force*, which was so godawful that I couldn't make it through the first ten minutes: Like *Submerged*, *Attack Force* began life as an entirely different genre of movie, but was changed in post-production.... Contacted by co-screenwriter Joe Halpin..., I couldn't resist asking if *Harvester* (as it was then titled) would really end up having aliens in it, or if they would disappear like the "biological mutants" of *Submerged*. He wasn't sure. "Who knows," he wrote. "We shot it a couple of ways -- and now it's up to the studio and Seagal to agree on a version. Aliens are in one and European mobsters are in another." ... Halpin's answer goes a long way toward explaining the state of *Seagalogy* at this point in the DTV Era. You think? They rewrote the movie AFTER THEY SHOT IT. Vern goes on to say that "the result is less of a disaster than I expected," which makes me think that he must be an Auschwitz survivor or something. *Plan 9 from Outer Space* was a masterpiece compared to *Attack Force*. And if Vern's account is accurate, Seagal made at least

another dozen movies nearly as bad. It's a miracle he can write a coherent sentence at all after sitting through the fruits of Seagal's DTV career. I had a hard time just reading about all these movies, Vern's irreverent commentary notwithstanding. Seagalology originally ended on a bit of a down note, but in 2012 Vern updated it with the chapters on the work Seagal did since the book was first published. I haven't seen most of Seagal's more recent movies, but Vern seems to think they're a few steps up from the dreck he churned out in the early 2000s, if not quite up to the Golden Age standards of *Above the Law*, *Hard to Kill* and *Out for Justice*. It's nice to hear that Seagal is still working and making more of an effort to produce quality movies, although to be perfectly honest, I got a little bored toward the end of this book. Vern may have taken his mission a little too seriously when he decided to detail every single one of Seagal's dreary, boring, and forgettable movies. A very entertaining book overall, but you're not missing much if you skip a few chapters toward the end.

I own both editions of this and will continue to buy more if Vern does more updates. The guy is the most trustworthy critic because his only agenda is to love film. His humor but also appreciation for Seagal makes this a must read and its guaranteed to make you laugh on every page.

This book was inspiring. After just reading the first chapter of this book I was going to the ghetto at night to look for creeps to deal justice too. I realized the error of my life and got myself a clip on ponytail. Let me tell you the girls will not leave me alone now.

The manner in which this chronicle of Seagal was written, was very refreshing, proper, and befitting of the man, the myth, the master chief. Thank you Vern, for this excellent book.

I got this for my boyfriend for Christmas and he LOVED it. After reading part of it he said "it's like I wrote this book, I totally agree with it!"

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