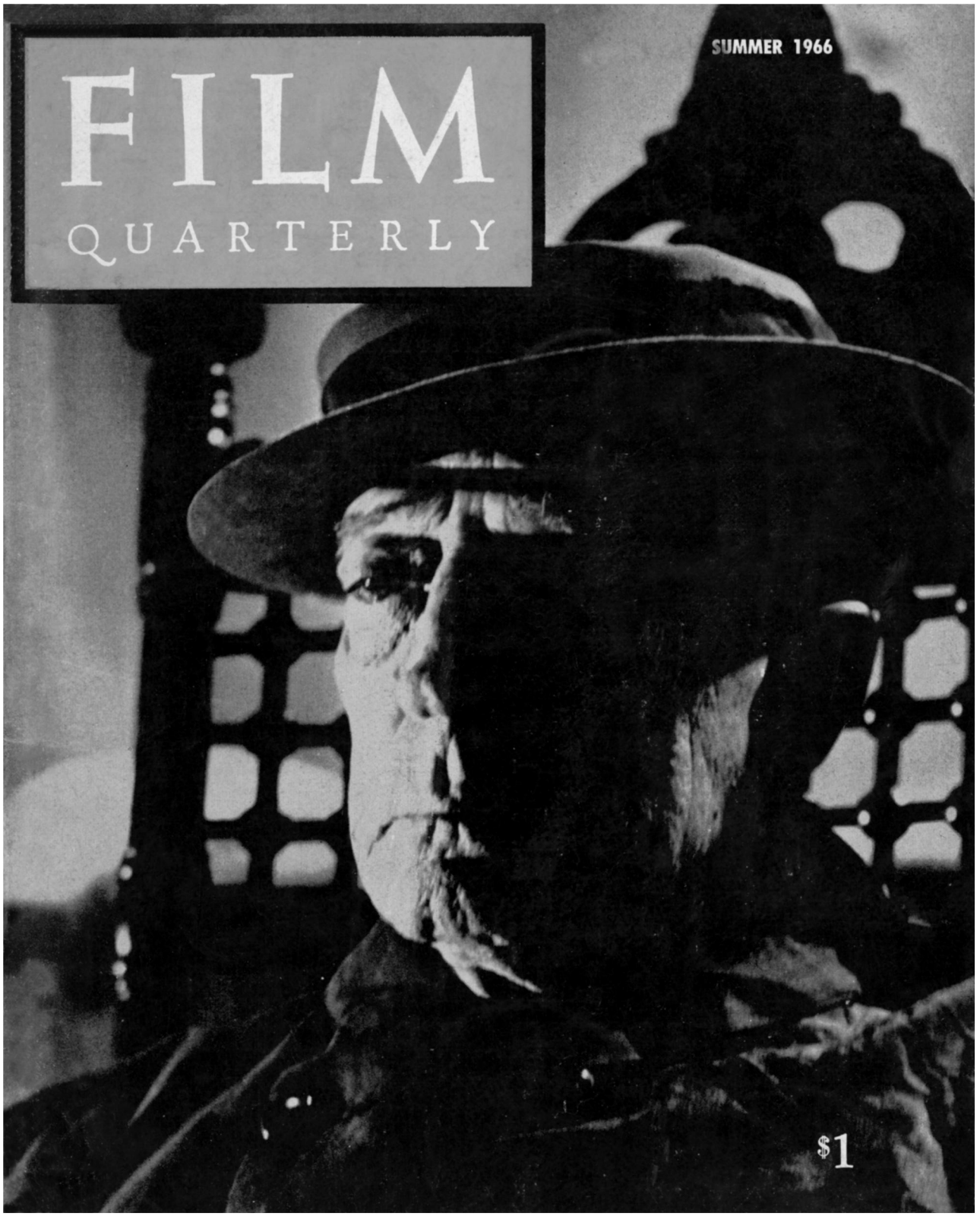
FILM QUARTERLY

SUMMER 1966



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Editor's Notebook

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ARTHUR B. FRIEDMAN

Buster Keaton: An Interview

With Keaton's death we have lost something irreplaceable from Hollywood's past. Luckily, in the last decade, Keaton had returned from obscurity, and had enjoyed some of the devotion he deserved. (In our first issue, in 1958, we published an interview and an article on him, hoping to show our own appreciation of one of the greatest masters of screen comedy.) Regrettably, he barely missed the publication of a long, affectionate, and detailed book about him—Rudi Blesh's KEATON. The interview below is part of what Keaton said when he and his wife spent an evening at Mr. Friedman's house—during which, with his well-known insatiable curiosity about mechanical things, Keaton correctly (and uniquely) identified a mysterious contraption the Friedmans keep in a corner: a noodle-slicer. . . .

Studio procedures had to be more permissive in those days.

Well, they were a lot different than making motion pictures now. For instance, I was an independent outfit working in my own studio. My camera man, my technical man, the entire staff—they're under salary fifty-two weeks a year because I went for years—when I got into making feature-length pictures—of only making two a year. One for spring release and one for fall release. Well, it actually didn't make any difference to us when I put the camera up. We owned our own camera. We weren't renting it. We had all our own equipment, and so it was the thing, even after the picture was finished, I'm in the projection room looking at cut sequences put together, and maybe the cutter says "That one is mistimed. Let's do that one over. Get those people back tomorrow." So that cost nothing. Well, today, if you did that in a motion picture, you'd wreck the company.

It's worse today than it was in the silent days because you've got so many technical things such as all your sound equipment. But a director today will rehearse people in a scene until he's got it mechanically perfect, and the way he wants it. But in doing it, the scene has become mechanical. The people have become mechanical. They're just walking through it like a parrot. So we used to say in the silent days, if we have to rehearse a scene very many times, one of the worst problems you've got on your hands is to unrehearse it.

You get stale on it so to make it look spontaneous, you throw a little pep into it so everything is unexpected and you don't anticipate so much. It was a very important thing with us. So, for that reason we used to just practically slowly walk through scenes and just talk them over. I'd never scrap the first actual take because invariably that'd be the scene you'd take even though you did it three or four times afterwards. The first take was generally the one you used. Our people were able to get the basic idea of a scene and take advantage of whatever came up, but comedians aren't brought up that

way any more. The minute something goes wrong nowadays, everybody stops cold. While I was on we used to keep cranking. . . .

Can you cite me an example of something that started out as an accident and ended up by working well for you?

Yeah. For instance, I went to jump across an alleyway on top of a tall building. We built the sets over the Third Street tunnel, at the Broadway tunnel, looking right down over Los Angeles. Now, by getting your cameras up on a high parallel and shooting past our set in the foreground with the street below, it looked like we were up in the air about twelve, fourteen stories high. And we actually had a net stretched from one wall to the other underneath the camera line so in case you missed any trick you were doing—one of those high, dizzy things—you had a net to fall into, although it was about a thirty-five-foot drop. . . .

And you didn't use a double. . . .

No. So my scene was there and the cops were chasing me. I came to this thing and I took advantage of the lid of a skylight, and I laid it over the edge of the roof to use as a springboard. I backed up, hit it, and tried to make the other side which was probably about eighteen feet. Well, I misjudged the spring of that board and I didn't make it. I hit flat up against the other set and fell to the net, but I hit hard enough that it jammed my knees a little bit, and my hips and elbows, 'cause I hit flush, flat—and I had to go home and stay in bed for about three days.

At the same time, me and the scenario department were a little sick because we can't make that leap. That throws the whole sequence, that routine, right out the window. So the boys the next day went into the projection room and saw the scene anyhow, 'cause they had it printed to look at it. Well, they got a thrill out of it, so they came back and told me about it. Says, "Well, if it looks that good let's see if we can pick it up this way. The best thing to do is to put an awning on a window, just a little small awning, just enough to break my fall," 'cause on the screen you could see that I fell about, oh I guess about sixteen feet, something like that. I must have passed two stories. So, now we go in and drop into something just to slow me up, to break my fall, and I can swing from that onto a rainspout and when I get ahold of it, it breaks and lets me sway out away from the building hanging onto it; and for a finish, it collapses enough that it hinges and throws me down through a window a couple of floors below.

Well, when we go back and check up on what this chase was about—the chase was this: I was getting away from the policemen, and we used the old Hollywood Station on Hollywood Boulevard which was right next door to the fire department. Well, when this pipe broke and threw me through the window, we went in there and built the sleeping quarters of the fire department with a sliding pole in the background. So I came through their window on my back, I slid across the floor, and lit up against the sliding pole and dropped to the bottom of the slide. I bounced from that to set on the rear of one of the trucks and I hit the rear and the truck pulled out, so I had to grab on for dear life, but I'm on my way to a fire—but the fire was at the Police Department. So we went back and shot the scene where I accidentally, not knowing it, had set fire to the Police Department before the cops started to chase me. Well, as it ended up, it was the biggest laugh sequence in the picture—all because I messed up the original trick.

Then I had another one that was actually a godsend. I had a bad picture, and we knew it, too. And there was nothing we could seem to do about it. It was called *Seven Chances*, and I had a short sequence where I was running away from a batch of women. Man had advertised for a bride. Didn't say what age or anything. Just said "Bride wanted at the church by three o'clock," or something like that, and these women, all shapes and forms, had showed up with home-made bridal outfits on, lace curtains, gingham table cloths for veils, and this chase was on. And I led them off into the open country and was coming down the side of the hill and there was some boulder rocks on that hill and I hit one accidentally, sliding down that hill on my feet most of the time, and I jarred this one

rock loose and it actually hit two other rocks, and I looked behind me in the scene and here come three boulder rocks about the size of bowling balls coming at me, bouncing down the hill with me and I actually had to scram to get out of the way.

Well, this was only the one scene of that in the picture but in the second preview when this was in there the audience sat up in their seats and they were ready. I says, "Oh, oh, that's all we need." We went back and I think for a finish we built fifteen hundred rocks, starting from grapefruit-size up to one was eight foot in diameter, and we went out on the ridge route and spotted one of those big barren mountains with these rocks and then I went up there and got started. At least I was working with paper maché, although the big one weighed four hundred pounds. By the time you built the framework, it weighed something like that—and you could get hit with them all right. Well, I got into the middle of that rock chase and it saved the picture for me and that was an accident. It was just an out-and-out accident.

When I was a kid, I had seen all the films of Chaplin, Lloyd, and Keaton who were, to me, the Big Three *of the world. No film I had seen had convulsed me more than Keaton's* THE NAVIGATOR, *which today remains one of my all-time favorites. As it turned out,* THE NAVIGATOR *was one of Keaton's pets, and we fondly mused over that film as a cherished memory. In our discussion, this film served to illustrate, perhaps better than anything else, the kind of thinking and the procedures that stamped these early comedians and most particularly Keaton. . . .*

Sitting around the studio with the scenario outfit between pictures and we're all groping for an idea, and we happen to hit a rut and nobody could think of anything that looked worthwhile. But at that time, Frank Lloyd was making a picture for Metro, which was right across the street from our studio, called *The Sea Beast.* I had a great technical man and they borrowed him from me and sent him up to 'Frisco to see if he could find any old four-masted schooner hulls. And while he was up there looking for these four-masted schooners, those that could be repaired enough to use—'cause Frank had to have four or five in a fleet or something like that for the picture—he found this ocean liner up there that they were going to salvage. It was called the *Buford.* It was the boat that brought the last princess over to this country from Russia, smuggled her out, I guess. And we found out that you could have this boat for twenty-five thousand dollars.

You could buy it for that?

Buy it! Now, it's an ocean liner about five hundred feet long. A passenger ship. This was in '23. So the minute we heard of that, we set out to see what we could do with it. Well, we got our start. Our start was a pip. Now this is the same construction. We got our start and jumped to the finish. Well, our start was that I take a couple of very rich people to establish a beautiful home in San Francisco, up on the hill with all kinds of servants to wait on you—that was me. I was a young fellow, bachelor, very young at the time. And the girl was the same thing. Her father was a ship owner, a wealthy ship owner and she had servants to wait on her.

So you know they'd been raised with a silver spoon in their mouths from the time they were born. Take those two characters . . . my opening gag in the thing was that I came down and got into my automobile in front of my house with a chauffeur and a footman, and the car just drove across the street to her house and I got out and called on the girl. I just went in there and says, "Will you marry me?" And she says, "No." I came back with my head down and the footman opened the car door for me and I said, "No, I think the walk will do me good," so I walked across the street.

The plot was that I had already sent down for tickets to go on a honeymoon and my butler advised Honolulu. So when I got home he handed me the tickets. But I had nobody to go with, so I tear up one ticket. I put the other one in my pocket and I says, "What time does it sail?" He says, "Nine o'clock." I says, "In the morning?" He says, "Yeah." I says, "That's too early, so I'll go aboard tonight."

All right. Now we want the night shot and we showed the night watchman coming out with his punch clock and I was supposed to go to pier 2, and we see this watchman come up to punch at this pier. He slides the gate over the *12*, but the gate hides the *1* and the 2 was still showing. And I see it from the car and decide that's the ship. And I go out there to get on this ship. Oh—and here's your plot—we went to a bunch of men in a building overlooking the bay of San Francisco, and looking down at the boat at the pier. One of them says, "That boat has just been bought by our enemies, the country that we're on the verge of going to war against. That ship will carry ammunition and supplies. It's up to us to see that she doesn't get there." He says, "Tonight, we'll go down there, we'll overcome the night watchman, or anybody else that gets in our way, throw her ropes off or cut them off and set that boat adrift. The wind will do the rest. It's a cinch to go up against those rocks on the other side of the Golden Gate and it's a doomed ship." That's the plot.

So, I come down and get on this boat. Now, there's nobody to meet me. There's no lights. It's a dead ship. There's no water. Nothing running. But I finally find my stateroom and when I get inside I have to light matches to see what I'm doing. But I put myself to bed.

About this time, these foreign agents arrive and overpower the watchman. And they go out to set this boat free. And they no more complete their job, they ignore the gang plank that goes onto the ship; but you could see that the ship is going away from the pier and that gang plank is just sliding. The girl and the father are all dressed up to go to a dinner party someplace and she brings the car to a stop—she's driving a coupé, and he says, "I had to have you drive me down past the *Navigator*, because I left some papers in the pilot house that I want and I'll only be a few minutes." He comes down to this pier and he runs into these agents. Well, they grab him, but before they can put a handkerchief on him, he yells "HELP." She hears it in the car. Well, they drag him into this little shed to bind him up. She doesn't know that but passes on down and goes over the gang plank onto the ship. She no more gets onto the ship when the ship is far enough away from the dock that the gang plank falls. So, she's on the ship. And it fades out.

Now, she has never been in a kitchen before in her life. You put her in a ship's galley where it takes two people to lift a frying pan; the coffee pot holds ten gallons, and the soup tureen holds twenty; and it takes two people to pick up a spoon. You see the trouble we got her in. And a jack-of-all-trades is something I never heard of, so I'm not very handy around the place, either. Well, there's your story.

Then we knew the finish. The finish was that I finally drifted over to a South Sea Island and met a batch of head hunters and cannibals and had to fight them off. We figured how to do that. Then that rounded that out. Then we went back to work on the middle. . . .

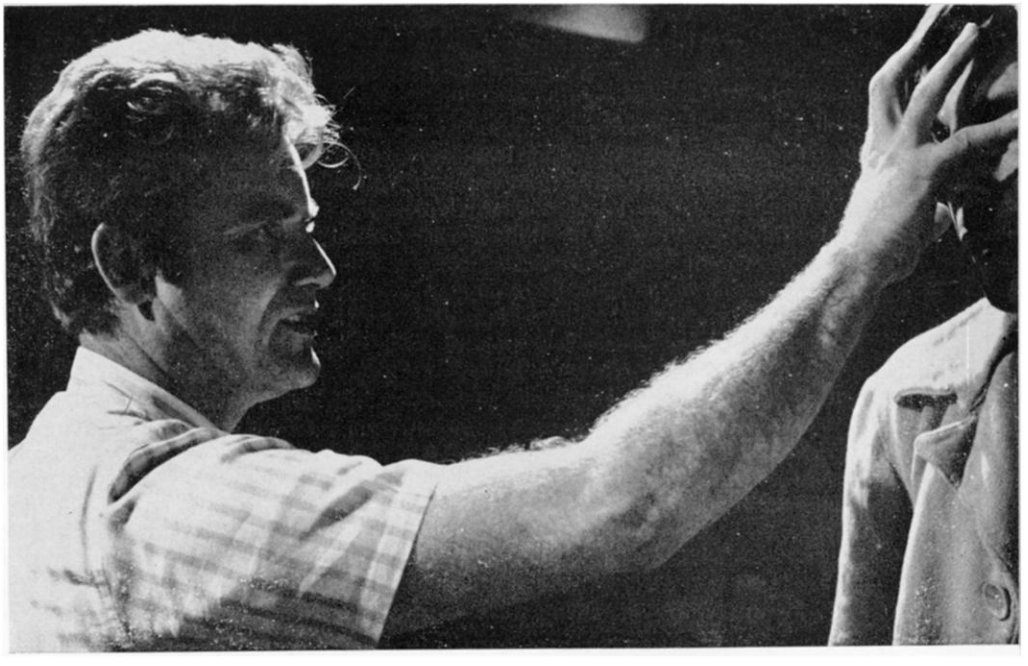
ALBERT JOHNSON

The Dynamic Gesture: New American Independents

The 1965 San Francisco Film Festival, in a special section originated by Mr. Johnson, presented a series of recent independent American features. These included a number of interesting if not entirely successful works, and this section of the festival (like the retrospectives) was a welcome attempt to broaden the usual festival format. Below we present a report on some of the films Mr. Johnson uncovered in preparing the series.

Vic Morrow's new career as a film director is, at least, in the "angry" tradition, rebelliously symbolized by his roles in such films as *The Blackboard Jungle*; one remembers him as the nineteen-fifties equivalent of Leo Gorcey; so it is not surprising in this decade to find him successfully portraying a hard-bitten soldier in the television series *Combat!* and presenting Jean Genet's *Deathwatch* as his initial directorial feature. In this film, it is at once noticeable that Morrow's approach to Genet's material is cautious and reverential. The script (by Morrow and Barbara Turner) has been adapted from Genet's original version of the play, and despite the usual uneasy moments of becoming accustomed to American intonations in a supposedly French prison atmosphere, the language can soon be accepted as somewhat stilted but eloquent poetry—a unique argot that fascinates the ear without disturbing the images and actions of the three characters. In his film-prologue to *Deathwatch*, Morrow sets the story's terrifying atmosphere with incisive effect: the spectator is placed inside a small cell where prisoners are forced into a tortuous, punitive promenade under the supervision of guards; the slow, agonized movements of the prisoners are continuously held, the rhythm of animal fatigue soon triumphing over individual will power as the men move between a series of Noguchi-like blocks — a primitive obstacle course. We concentrate upon a particular prisoner, LeFranc (Leonard Nimoy), for he is one of the major figures later in the film, and soon LeFranc attacks one of the guards, in a state of half-crazed fatigue. Immediately, the film cuts to an execution being watched by the assembled prisoners in the courtyard. Close-ups of the men's faces are stark, memorable glimpses into the depths of pain, expectation, and fear: the condemned man's head is set into place, and the blade of the guillotine (seen from below) crashes down to his instant decapitation.

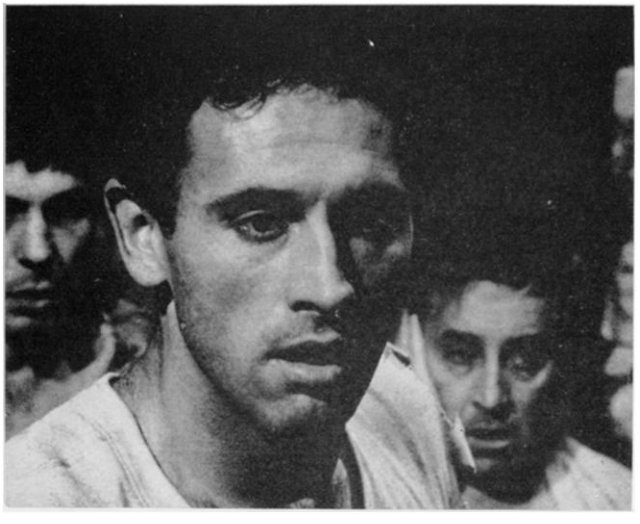
At this point, the music and titles appear, and *Deathwatch* then settles into a less forceful but altogether absorbing film. As a counterpart to Genet's *Un Chant d'Amour,* it relies more heavily upon characterization and dialogue, and it is less shocking. The interplay of the three cellmates, LeFranc, Green-Eyes (Michael Forest), and Maurice (Paul Mazursky), is still rather stagebound, although one recognizes the limited scope available to the cinematographer in terms of his single setting. *Deathwatch* is



Vic Morrow directing Leonard Nimoy in DEATHWATCH.

close to *No Exit* in presenting its destructive, claustrophobic arena in which three individuals are helplessly thrown together, and there are moments in which the emotional intensity of the actors is able to carry one along–like one who peeks into the lives of condemned creatures, like the insidiously perverted guard who spies upon the prisoners after they have retired for the night in *Un Chant d'Amour*. However, once Morrow has introduced us into the forbidden world of male prison life, the evil lies always off-screen. The homosexual content of the play is focussed on the character of Maurice; unfortunately, Morrow has flawed this aspect of the story by *physical* miscasting. Mazursky gives an excellent, stylized performance, but even this cannot overcome the realistic demands of close cinematic scrutiny. Maurice's homosexuality transcends externalization; he is supposed to be the deadliest of this species – the demonic angel, an irresistible adolescent who understands the nature of his destructiveness and is somehow able to inspire pity and create hatred. At least, this is the sort of individual that Genet's description evokes; he should be like Dargelos-in-bondage. Thus, Mazursky is too old for the part and not attractive enough to evoke so much violence and doom. As a result, *Deathwatch* has a strange, out-of-reach quality about it–we watch, we listen, but only occasionally are we horrified or deeply moved. Perhaps these moments are enough to warrant tribute to Morrow's bravery in making the film at all, but one is constantly aware of a work of inherent greatness, marred by the divergence of an audience's attention from *three* characters to only one. In the film, it is LeFranc who controls one's consciousness. Leonard Nimoy's portrayal is pure Genet; here is "the essential man," branded by thievery, but already carrying within every haunted look his own apprehension of epic evil. Nimoy has controlled the subtle, very French *understatement* of stunted hope and intellectualized larceny that is a part of the prison psyche. This is emphasized, for Jacques Becker's *le Trou* achieved greatness because of this characteristic; it was something that he had recognized in his preparation for the film and a trait that he insisted upon (notice particularly the performances of Marc Michel and Philippe Leroy). The French awareness of these psychological levels in dealing with prison films is non-

existent in American cinematics (one suspects that neither Nimoy nor Morrow have seen Becker's film) and that is why Nimoy's impression is so powerful. From the moment that LeFranc watches Maurice and Green-Eyes make love, his characterization peels away layer after layer of emotional subterfuge, until LeFranc reveals himself as the one most warmed by the suffering of others, the most tragic member of Genet's doomed trio. The enmity of the prison guard is only a minor theme in the film, and the character of Green-Eyes is played with stoical handsomeness by Michael Forest; this role was not explored enough by Morrow, one feels. Forest's likable destitute, tortured by reminiscences and half-demented poetry of the spirit, only occasionally seems real, and never French. Like Maurice, he is entrapped by the possibilities of the role onstage, without altogether encompassing its range as a film portrayal. The pitiability of Green-Eyes at the conclusion of *Deathwatch* (when, with all morality thrown aside at the expense of survival, he discovers that loneliness is stronger than anything else in prison life) is less moving than the disintegration of LeFranc, but if only Morrow had been able to explore even further into the dark recesses of Genet's world! This is not meant to seem unappreciative of the courageousness of *Deathwatch* as it exists; Morrow is clearly one of the best new American talents revealed this year. It is simply that the works of Jean Genet are widely known now and to transplant his stories to the screen implies more defiance, more recognition of the structure of evil as a dramatic device. Among the worlds of condemned creatures and the transitory perversity of adolescence, there are heroes to examine, never explored in American cinema; it is time for us to finally recognize that the psychological distances between Dargelos and Snowball are not so wide.



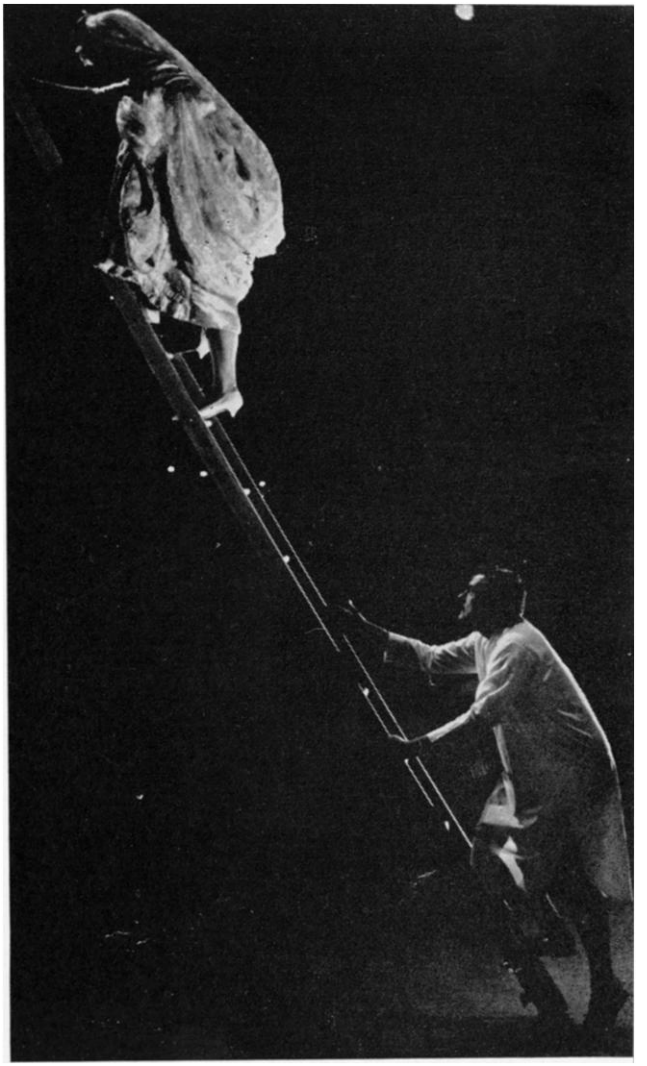
Three faces from Genet: Leonard Nimoy, Michael Forest, Paul Mazursky.

There have been several projects for a film production of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, with the late Jerry Wald's proposed venture being the most widely trumpeted, and now it appears that Joseph Strick (*The Savage Eye*, *The Balcony*) is actually preparing such a work. However, there could hardly be a more joyful sound in the cinema than that caused by Mary Ellen Bute's first feature film, *Passages from Finnegan's Wake*, independently financed, produced and filmed in Ireland. The film is actually a hymn in praise of life, in which we move from a world of dreams, the dreams of Finnegan, or H. C. Earwicker, or Here Comes Everybody (whatever one wishes to call the "Hero"), into a conscious awareness of the beauty of Time and the River Liffey, symbol of love and womankind. The intellectual film, as a genre, is definitely not indigenous to American cinema, and Mary Ellen Bute, a devoted American Joycean, has proved that she is not daunted by the challenge of breaking new frontiers of cinema expression. Her film, based upon a play by Mary Manning, is an approach to Joyce's epic novel, *Finnegan's Wake*, and only a visual translation of some of its labyrinthine composition. *Passages from Finnegan's Wake* is a light comedy, drenched in visual and spoken poetry, its humors Irish, its satire American, its over-all effect an original, successful assault upon the senses. There has never been a film quite like it before, because, in addition to its Joycean structure, the film has English subtitles imposed upon it in order to give audiences an opportunity to appreciate Joyce's usage of puns for comic effect. During the 1965 San Francisco Festival, the audience was enthusiastically responsive to Miss Bute's clever juxtaposition of illusionary flashbacks and realistic dreams. One feels that she envisioned the film as a tapestry of lively episodes,

each one only vaguely attached to the other, giving the spectator a hypnotic experience in Joyce's world of Irish whimsy and wistful regrets. Through the dreamworld of the film, the spectator as well as the characters reach the kind of aesthetic self-redemption that defies definition—it is all *emotional*—this succession of awarenesses and indefinable recognitions of oneself. Finnegan dreams that he falls into an underworld of death, where his friends mourn through song and dance ("a regular funferall," as Joyce describes it), and the dual parts of his personality come to life, one called Shem ("Wisdom's son") and the other, Shaun ("Folly's brother"). These two figures cavort throughout the film, always symbolic of the dark-and-light of living, and the director not only utilizes them to satirize the Irishman's drunken nocturnal roisterings and sentimentalized adoration of Celtic myth, but also to poke fun at such present-day realities as television, atomic warfare, and the theater of the absurd.

The spectator must allow himself to be carried along by the film's excitements and shifting moods; the grand charade of Finnegan's wake is disrupted when the revelers cry "Wake! Wake!" and Finnegan opens his eyes, steps from his coffin, and, donning a white Panama hat, renames himself "Here Comes Everybody." There is a sequence, too, in which Finnegan, H. C. Earwicker, and Here Comes Everybody (all played by the same actor, Martin J. Kelly), have a triple-edged conversation; here, the language becomes very abstruse and the subtitles are absolutely necessary. Not only does Kelly assume all three of these characters, but he is also embodying the Shem-Shaun parts of his personality for the only time in the film—heretofore, they had been played by two other actors. With one actor suddenly speaking for three, then *five* characters, one has only the changes of costume to assist him, plus the subtitles.

The beautiful actress who represents the "soul" of Finnegan, the Joycean ideal of eternal wisdom and feminine endurance, the River Liffey (Jane Reilly), also appears in a number of guises; she is Anna Livia Plurabelle, the dream-wife, mistress, and mother; she is Kate, the barroom slattern who endures the whiskied breath of late-night Dublin pubs and overturned pails on tiled floors; she is a television hoyden in a tub, rubbing herself languorously with Irish whiskey; a vaudeville dance-hall girl; and a stately mock-Iseult to Finnegan's dream of himself as King Mark. Sometimes, the whimsy of the film flows away, leaving one only with its images, poetry, and a reasonless delirium that holds and fascinates, as if one stared into a beautiful landscape which refused to



Jane Reilly and Martin J. Kelley in PASSAGES FROM FINNEGAN'S WAKE.

allow him to recover from reverie, and it is Anna Livia's abrupt changes of character that keep the moods adrift. By dawn, she runs in a bridal gown around a square—as Iseult, she brings a cup to Tristan (embodied by the Shem-figure) —as Anna, she sits in bed with a harp, singing.

The camerawork (Ted Nemeth) and musical score (Elliot Kaplan) are magnificent additions to Mary Ellen Bute's unusual film. Certain moments are extremely moving because of their precise amalgam of image and sound in order to create a sense of timelessness, emotional loss, and nostalgia. The Shem-Tristan figure walks along the beach, dreaming of Iseult, throwing flowers to the tide, and he is interrupted by Finnegan's irreverent revelers, jaunting about the sands with incongruous merriment, while deep, ominous strains of music accentuate his anguish. Later by the snow-banked Liffey, Shem disconsolately pays homage to himself, a "dweller in the downandoutermost." The emptiness of a modern terminal (New York's Kennedy Airport) becomes the background for Finnegan's revelers to romp across the floors, staircases, and baggage ramps and, in ornate surroundings, Anna's five children engage in a slow Vigo-dance of horseplay and pillow feathers.

Nemeth's views of the Liffey are camera poetics of sunlight and water, reflections broken into myriads of sparkle, or reflections through trees, movements which gradually lead us to the film's haunting and affirmative conclusion. The final moments are visual paeans, an exquisite evocation of Joyce's call to life. In the early hours of morning, Earwicker awakes, the city stirs, and some impressive images appear of commuter trains, seeming to emerge from each other. All at once, we are in the world of poetic documentary as Earwicker begins his ode of tribute to the awakening spirit ("Hues of rich, unfolding morn . . .") and strides into the morning, dressed in white, hopeful at "half past quick" in the "dapple-gray dawn, awakening all droners that drowse in Dublin." The spectator moves with Earwicker back into reality, but remembering dreamily all that has gone before. *Passages from Finnegan's Wake* is a movement from Joyce's chamber music, his lilting imagination that hopefully delivers us from "the alter ego asses of our pseudoselves."

Some of the independent film gestures are less spectacular but just as exciting, whether they are made in Hollywood or elsewhere. It is very easy to become a "lost" film-maker in America: even a director of great talent like Irvin Kershner, for instance, has until very recently been unjustly overlooked. John Cassavetes' independent work, *The Marriage*, is still in the editing stage; Hubert Cornfield has not been heard from since the brilliant *Pressure Point*, and who knows what became of Paul von Schreiber, a young film-maker whose featurette *Weekend Pass* showed such delightful promise? Von Schreiber directed and acted the leading role of an ingenuous young hick sailor spending his first weekend in the sleaziest (to him, glamorous) section of Los Angeles. The film is splendidly tragicomic as we watch the sailor being ogled in the hotel shower-room by a fat, flirtatious old man; picking up a sweet-looking girl in the park with incredible, ego-boosting ease, only to find out that she is a religious fanatic; and finally, getting robbed of his money by a prostitute who pretends to be a gamine.

Von Schreiber's acting, mostly pantomimed, would be admired by any Keaton devotee: mournful-faced, innocent, and a gangle of arms and legs—a true, American hero. The atmosphere of a certain area of Los Angeles, now greatly altered by city planners, is captured forever with its neon and shoddy bars; we see here a mellowed view of the tragic world inhabited by Kent MacKenzie's Indians in *The Exiles*. Von Schreiber told me once about a feature he had planned, but nothing has evolved, and *Weekend Pass* remains a polished gem awaiting a larger audience for a talented newcomer.

The work of Allen Baron is also neglected. His first feature, *Blast of Silence* (1962) is the best American film about a hired assassin to have been made so far—it stands up against such accomplished works of the genre as Boetticher's *Murder, Inc.* and Lerner's *Murder by Contract*. Baron's film was praised for its docu-

mentary quality—it caught New York's pre-wintry starkness, and tawdry beauty of the underworld; it was brutal, uncompromising, and truthful. Baron also played the role of the assassin with chilling authenticity, and yet the film passed into respectful oblivion; I am not certain whether it was released abroad, but one pleasurably recalls its treatment of locale and character actors (it introduced the wonderful Larry Gates, later utilized by Preminger as the obese invert in *Advise and Consent*). After a long sojourn in television directing, Baron made his second feature, *Pie in the Sky* (1964) and this was only released in 1965. It is a charming, O. Henry-ish tale of New York and the picaresque adventures of a young farm boy in the wilds of Manhattan. It is a tale of innocence adjusting to evil, the semi-maturity of a nine-year-old. The film is *not* sentimental and the dialogue, characterizations, and sense of humanity are impressively true-to-life. The boy, Brill (Richard Bray), is an unswervingly Dickensian figure, a modern Paul Dombey, attractive, deceptively fragile-looking, and optimistic enough to assuage the cynical responses of Paco (Roberto Marsach), a Puerto Rican shoeshine boy who takes Brill home with him. The film centers around the friendship Brill develops with Susie (Lee Grant), a call-girl who decides to take care of the boy when she learns that he is a city-drifter. The episodes are given to us very simply. Brill does not understand Susie's occupation, and she recognizes her need for association with total innocence. Grant's acting never falls into cliché; if the prostitute does not have a heart of gold, then she never has any customers. Susie and Brill adopt each other quietly—he needs a mother, she needs a son, and that is that. What is memorable about *Pie in the Sky* is Baron's knowledge of urban life and his love for people. His gallery of New Yorkers are totally alive, sometimes vicious, and always inarticulate with feeling. Paco's city-wise sophistication defines the child-of-the-street with hilarious effect, and when Brill and Susie are separated (she is arrested by the Vice Squad), the child's journey homeward to the country is marked by a peculiar encounter with a Negro couple who shelter him for a night. He is fearful, a trifle resentful toward their kindness, and ashamed of his suspicion that they have stolen his money; the director elicits expert reactions from his child-actor in exhibiting the gulf between children and adults who are reduced to silence by the inexpressibility of love.

Like *Pie in the Sky*, Everett Chambers' film *The Lollipop Cover* (1965) also looks at the relationship between a child and an adult, in the picaresque tradition. In this case a young prizefighter (Don Gordon) meets a strange little girl named Felicity (Carol Seflinger) while hiking through southern California. He is in search of his wife, who has run away with his earnings and her lover; the child has been abandoned by her father and lives in an old car on the beach. The fighter resents Felicity's determination to travel with him, but of course one knows that eventually they will grow to love and need each other. During the course of their travels, Chambers throws in some disarmingly effective vignettes: the prizefighter's semi-seduction by an over-exuberant waitress, the confrontation with the wife's lover, an incurable drug addict, and the wordless, expressive moments of the hero's annoyance and final acceptance of the destitute child. The title refers to Felicity's habit of looking at her surroundings through a colored piece of candy wrapping in order to make things seem more pleasant: Chambers uses this device with dramatic restraint and the same innate sense of humanity that characterized Baron's film. *The Lollipop Cover* is more sentimental, but it is so simple in its aims that it entertains and moves one to a mild compassion for these misfit itinerants; it is much more believable than Hutton's *Wild Seed* which had attractive performances but kept one too detached from its protagonists. Chambers knew that his film was a fable and enhanced this quality, so that in *The Lollipop Cover* the honesty of the director pervades the fanciful mood of a dreamy child who could win a prizefighter's confidence without rousing an audience's skepticism.

GEORGE BLUESTONE

Lunch with Lester

Richard Lester is checking a scene from *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* on a moviola in the cutting room at Twickenham Film Studios. His editor, John Victor Smith, shuts off the dual tracks and leans back thoughtfully. Lester has traded in the suntans and old sweaters of his roving days for black tailored trousers, slim and tapered, black pullover jersey and doe-skin suede jacket. His forehead recedes into a prematurely bald dome. Wisps of reddish-brown hair protrude from a thinning fringe, giving him the look of a precocious maestro. After eleven years in London, his accent is what Englishmen call "mid-Atlantic," a cadence neither Oxbridge nor standard American but something in between. His smile, reminding you of the early Fernandel, is strictly send-up. He looks like a character from one of his films.

That morning Lester and Smith removed some footage from their workprint, and they have just run the scene to check its rhythm. Lester looks dissatisfied.

"Do you think it hurts any?" asks the editor, a mild-mannered man with glasses, tousled gray hair, and a pastel-striped tie.

"No," says Lester thoughtfully.

"Do you think it helps then?"

"No, it doesn't help either."

"All right, then I put it back?"

"Yes, put it back. After lunch."

We drive in a gleaming red Minni Minor to a local pub where tables are set for lunch with linen cloths and plastic flowers. Over tomato juice, poached skate in a fine caper sauce, Lester talks. He is still saddened by the death of Buster Keaton, who plays Erronius in *Forum*.

—You know, Buster was amazing. He was dying in Spain and he knew it. I guess we all knew it. His part in *Forum* is mostly running. We had to shoot in short takes. He'd finish a sequence racking and coughing, looking a hundred years old. But his legs were magnificent. Once we had the stunt man do a scene where a chariot just misses Erronius. Something went wrong and the stunt man was knocked down. That blow would have killed Buster. After the stunt man was taken away to the infirmary, Buster said he wanted to do the scene. I held my breath, but Buster went through the maneuver in one take and did it perfectly. That was a loss. A very big loss.

Lester asks about *Film Quarterly*. I say it is the closest thing we have to *Sight & Sound*. What does he think of *Sight & Sound*?

—What I think of most critical film mags. They're fine for people interested in movies as an art form. But from the point of view of the film-maker, the man who does the hard technical work and has to make a thousand daily decisions, they're not much help.

Lester senses that the interview is about to get "serious." His answers become thoughtful, measured, but cheerfulness keeps breaking through. Like most first-rate directors (a Truffaut, an Eisenstein are rare exceptions), he has an occupational fear of sounding like an egghead. He would much rather discuss technique than "meaning." Given a personal anecdote, he is loose, animated, charming. But his response to interpretive questions is a long face, an air of unhappiness, a polite and chilly precision.

—I've lived over here eleven years now. I was born and raised in Philadelphia, went to Penn Charter, a Quaker high school. No, I'm not a Quaker myself, but the school had a good reputation, so my parents encouraged me to go. Then I attended the University of Pennsylvania, majored in clinical psychology, of all things. I did a lot of writing and composing for college reviews, but at that time I thought I was going to be a big rat man. (Lester makes this sound as though it was a very long time ago.)

—When I graduated, I got a job in Phila-

delphia TV. The psych went by the boards. At that time Philadelphia had the first and largest Television City in the country, and they were producing a great many network programs. I worked on a sort of science-educational show called "Summer School," and a circus program (the name escapes me), fairly routine commercial stuff. But I was young and it was good training. After two years it became clear to me that I could settle down, make a lot of money, buy a house in the suburbs, get a deep freeze and have lots of filet mignon. But I didn't want to live like that. I was too young to know how everything was going to turn out. So I decided to cut loose and travel. I talked three provincial papers into paying me ten dollars each a week as a sort of roving correspondent. And I took off.

—I traveled around the Continent having a good time, sending back little two-page communiqués, enough to keep me in pin money. I play jazz piano a little, so I picked up odd jobs in bars and coffee houses, a party here and there. For awhile I had a trio—bass, horn and piano. We worked out of Paris. How do I play? Well, I'm not very good, but the jobs—and the communiqués—kept me going. Somehow I ended up in Tangiers running money across the Straits of Gibraltar. You could get a few pesetas more on your money in Tangiers—it's sort of an open port like Hong Kong—so I'd load up my pockets on the Spanish side, take the boat over and unload in Tangiers. Nothing illegal about it. You just had to be willing to run back and forth. If you made enough trips, the way I did, you had enough to eat.

—Around that time I finished a musical comedy I'd been working on, decided to come to England to sell it. It was eventually produced on AR—Associated Rediffusion. It was called "Curtains for Harry" and it was very bad.

—After that I put in a couple of years working in British television. I also did commercials on the side. I latched on to the old Peter Sellers "Goon Show," which was going out over radio and television in half-hour packages. I wrote gags, directed sequences, did a little bit of everything. Eventually I formed my own company to produce TV commercials—I must have done over a hundred. That way I had my fun with "The Goon Show" and earned a living in advertising.

—Then I married a British girl, and—I don't know—maybe I felt the same thing happening to me that was happening in Philadelphia. Anyway, I quit, took my wife on a round-the-world honeymoon. God, we must have gone everywhere—North Africa, Martinique, Venezuela, Eastern United States, Canada, San Francisco, Tahiti, New Zealand, Singapore, Cochin, Cairo, Malta. The whole bit. It's a great way to get to know somebody. My wife and I were together practically every minute of every day. We didn't have much money, but it was wonderful. It's just the kind of thing you *should* do when you're young. I mean why wait till you retire? On that trip I stopped off awhile in Canada, did some work for CBC. I met some of the fine filmmakers working for the National Film Board. I remember Norman Jewison was serving his apprenticeship. That was before he went to Hollywood to direct films like *The Cincinnati Kid.*

—By 1959, I was back in London working for "The Goon Show" again. That's when I did *The Running, the Jumping and the Standing Still.* We had some film left over, so we decided to have some fun. We'd done some of the gags for the show—like the scene with the boxing glove. We just reshot some of the gags, added others. All in a day and a half. Sellers was very cooperative—so was everybody else—and we had a good time doing it. Later we learned that audiences really got a big kick out of that short. I understand it played in art houses all over the States.

—About a year later I got a chance to make my first feature. There was a big pop revolution over here in 1960. About five Dixieland bands were going strong, playing to sellout houses all over London. Fantastically popular. Columbia Pictures decided they wanted to make a pop film using four or five of these combos. They gave me a script with a loose narrative and said go ahead. Well, we got rid of the narrator by satirizing him. We called the film *It's Trad, Dad*

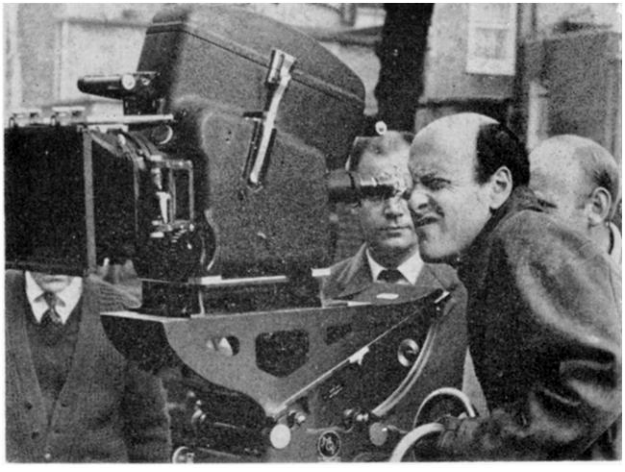
[traditional]. I haven't seen it recently, so I don't know how I'd feel about it today. *Movie* did a story on it, saying they could detect the "early Lester" style.

—Then came *Mouse on the Moon* for United Artists. I enjoyed doing the film, but it suffers from the weakness of most sequels. We had to use the same characters, the same situations, many of the same actors. Well, you know what happens. It wasn't a free movie.

—Then—let's see—more commercials. And —*A Hard Day's Night*. Funny how these things happen. In *It's Trad, Dad*, I used a combo—remember this wasn't so long ago—'60, '61. These guys had a collection of amateur records made by an exciting group with a new sound and a fine sense of musicianship, and they were passing these records among their friends and making them listen. This new group was called The Beatles. Well, it turned out later the Beatles had seen *The Running, the Jumping . . .* and when the time came for going into production they wanted to make a film with the same sense of freedom and exuberance. I mean they wanted to make a *good* film, not just an exploitation film. So United Artists, at their request, asked me to direct. This was—1963. Since then I've done *The Knack*, based on Ann Jellicoe's play—John here was editing the last sequences while I was already out on location grinding away on *Help!* and now *Forum*.

—It all happened very fast. Like we did the fine cut of *A Hard Day's Night* in two and a half weeks! I guess all those years of commercial experience helped. I've brought every one of my films in on time without going over my budget. You learn to work under pressure, to make intuitive decisions on the spot. It's a lot easier—and faster—if you know what your lenses can do, know exactly how to get an effect and can communicate that information to your cameraman. You learn when to be firm, when to be flexible.

I said that in a review of *The Knack*, I'd made the point that Lester's films, like Keaton's, are the kind that create the illusion of improvisation and spontaneity through absolute control. Had there been anything in *A Hard Day's Night* that wasn't in the script?



Richard Lester directing THE KNACK.

—Well, the Beatles are very able and very disciplined performers. Our script was very tight, but the boys were often encouraged to suggest bits of business themselves. You remember the press interview? We shot that by thinking up questions, springing them on the boys, and allowing them to give their own answers. Well, they're very good at that kind of thing, so it worked. Or take the business with the camera during Ringo's long walk. That wasn't in the script, but someone had the camera on the set, and I thought it would be a good prop to work with, so I told Ringo to use it. On the other hand, the entire scene where Paul McCartney is roped into the shirt-advertising campaign—that followed the script exactly.

—The playing-field sequence was another example of improvising within a concept. I knew I wanted that sequence to contrast with the claustrophobic feeling you get in all those trains, hotels, studios, cars. We taught the boys three games, told them to go ahead and play them any way they liked. Then we shot the scene from different angles—a helicopter one day, varied distances the next. I didn't know until we got on location that I was going to use those slow-motion shots. You see, it all started when John Lennon got back from Sweden and I asked him how he liked Stockholm. "How should I know?" he said. "You get off the plane, they push you into a car, you're delivered to a hotel, have cocktails and those godawful cheese sandwiches, get into another car, drive to your

performance, then back to the airport, fly home. How should I know if I liked Stockholm? I never even saw it."

How did he manage to give the crowd scenes the feeling of choreography?

—That's another example of luck—and editing. The Beatles' fans tracked them all over the place. Every time we got to a new location there would be these mobs of girls trying to get a hand on them. Sometimes cordons of constables couldn't control them. One day after we finished shooting, the boys headed for their car to be chauffeured home. I told the cameraman to keep turning, record whatever happened. Just then a drove of screaming fans were cut loose and began converging on the car. When I saw the rushes I took one look at the expressions on the boys' faces—and decided to put the scene in the picture. The rest was pacing and rhythm worked out in the editing.

Lester smiles at John Victor Smith.

—John didn't edit that film, but he knows what editing can do. This scene follows the one where the Beatles are in the train station. If you look closely at that scene, you'll see that the boys are wearing one set of clothes in the train, and entirely different clothes in the car. As far as I know, nobody has noticed the discrepancy. You can get away with a lot if the editing is good and the action compelling.

I am interested in the attention given to color in *Help!* Sometimes it seemed to me the whole film was an exercise in color. How for instance did Lester get those effects, during song numbers, where a face begins in soft-focus, bathed in violet light, then sharpens as the background blurs?

—For that particular effect you shoot with a telephoto lens or a zoom opened up as far as it will go, and take the scene at a great distance. We did most of our musical numbers with the traditional technique of mouthing words against studio-produced playback. The Beatles are very good at this, right down to reproducing those small, dramatic, facial subtleties that are often lost in re-recording. Because they're so skillful, I knew I could work very close—adding the sweat in the last stages of the recording session in *A Hard Day's Night* was one of the few artificial touches I allowed myself. I designed those in-and-out-of-focus shots you mention in *Help!* to give the production numbers movement without too much cutting. If you have a first-rate cameraman, you can leave the rest to him.

I say I heard an American film critic object to Lester's technique for trying to make movies look as much as possible like TV commercials. What would he say to that?

— . . .

Why is it that the action sequences in the Beatle movies are fast, almost anarchic, but in the production numbers the pace slows down, becomes almost static?

—I wanted the music to speak for itself. Remember, the Beatles are musicians first, actors second. That pop combo who used to pass around the Beatles' first records were right. Musicians have a very high regard for these boys. They're fantastic perfectionists. I've seen them record a passage twenty, thirty times and still not be satisfied.

I say it is strange that this side of them, their discipline, never gets into the films.

—Well, they have an obligation to their public. Fans like to think the sounds come from God, not from hard work. They're very conscious, the Beatles, that being free and easy is part of their image. What fan wants to be told that her idol *works* ten hours a day?

What films had impressed him most over the years? Lester rattles off a long list that includes *Wild Strawberries*, *The Seventh Seal*, *Breathless*, Keaton's *The General*, all of Truffaut before *La Peau Douce*, *La Notte* (but not *The Eclipse*), *Le Caporal Epinglé*, *Seven Samurai*, *Citizen Kane*. I point out that only a fraction of these are comedies. What do the others have in common?

—They're all director's films.

Now that Lester's services are hotly in demand and he is in the unique position of having financial and critical success, what is he thinking of for his next project?

—I'm negotiating for a film, a novel I have in

mind, but I don't want to jinx it by talking about it. Eventually I want to do another film with Michael Crawford (who worked with me in *The Knack* and *Forum*). We're calling it *How I Won the War*. Charles Wood, who adapted *The Knack* and wrote *Help!* is doing the screenplay. It will be about a young lieutenant who writes his war memoirs—he'll be a sort of heavily armed civilian, you know, the kind who used to be picked up during the war just because he owned a gun, then was told to go and kill the enemy.

The waitress has cleared away the plates of skate bones. Lester has an appointment, and John wants to go back to the cutting room to reinsert this morning's abandoned footage. We take the Minni Minor back to Twickenham Studios. Lester pokes his head through the door of the recording studio, spots some actors who have arrived for post-synching. A technician adjusts the gain dials on his sound board. Lester waves and disappears behind the heavy soundproofed door, moving like a man who knows exactly where he is going.

GINETTE BILLARD

Tours—and the Salvation of Shorts

In France two festivals exist exclusively for short films: Tours and (every other year) Annecy. These are keystones of French success in preventing the attrition of the short-film field which has occurred elsewhere, and it seems worthwhile to consider whether we can learn something from the French example. Devotion to the short film may go far toward explaining the emergence of an unusual number of talented young directors in recent French cinema: for it is in shorts that the beginning film-maker must serve his apprenticeship (and often make his early mistakes). Without an active and respected short-film industry, aspiring directors have no way of learning their métier except through amateur projects and television; and this latter route, we are being forced to conclude, no longer produces exciting directors. Yet how can the short film again be made economically viable?

The short film festivals in France are especially delightful because of their sites: Tours is a lovely city along the Loire River, and Annecy lies on a lake in the French Alps. This is the eleventh year for Tours, and around 200 professionals—film-makers, producers, journalists, technicians—were in attendance; some 1,700 people, most of them from the Tours area, bought tickets at each of the 14 festival showings. (Annecy, which specializes in animation films only, is a smaller affair, but with intense loyalty from the animators clan and their fans, and also solid local backing.)

Before Tours and Annecy, the short film was no more honored in France than it now is elsewhere. A few journalists wrote of shorts, mostly

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Before Tours and Annecy, the short film was no more honored in France than it now is elsewhere. A few journalists wrote of shorts, mostly

in the specialized magazines. Now, with the festivals established, and with the system of government premiums to shorts of high quality, a significant opening has been made. In fact, these festivals now play such an important role that films are made with the festivals in mind. Producers come to Tours to learn what is going on and what they should plan. The names of film-makers who have first gained public notice through the Tours festival include Pierre Etaix, Jacques Demy, Chris Marker, Agnes Varda, Carlos Villardebo, Alain Resnais, Richard Leacock, Vittorio de Seta, and Vera Chytilova, to cite only the best known. The festival has been remarkable not only in bringing interesting new work into the public eye, but in dramatizing the short film in general; at Tours, one year, you could see forty films by Norman McLaren. (At Annecy you could see a remarkable exhibition of his drawing boards, drawings, instruments.)

Perhaps the best way to understand the origins and success of the French short film festivals is to relate the story of Pierre Barbin, the remarkable individual behind them. Born in 1926, Barbin founded a ciné-club in Versailles, outside Paris, in 1945; he was its president and moving spirit for twenty years. By 1951, the advent of television had led to a sharp crisis in the French film world. Barbin, whose family is prominent in Versailles, had good social and political connections, and he organized a series of showings which he entitled "Les Journées du Cinéma"—Film Days. Set up with the cooperation of the syndicates in the industry—mainly theater owners—these had a considerable success in making the public conscious of film. This attracted the attention of a governmental body, the Centre National du Cinéma, then under Jacques Flaud, whose stimulating influence is as much responsible for the New Wave as anyone's. The authorities encouraged the formation of a permanent "Association des Journées du Cinéma" which later became the "Association Française pour la Diffusion du Cinéma." This organization now runs the Tours and Annecy festivals, and Barbin is its director. (Incidentally, the Centre National was originally part of the Ministry of Information, though it led an autonomous existence; it was later brought under the control of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs headed by André Malraux. Its functions are to control the film industry—authorizing production and distribution, promoting French films abroad through Unifrance, backing the Cinémathèque, and operating the Tours and Annecy festivals.

The aim of the Association was to organize showings that would bring back, hopefully, the French liking for cinema, at a moment when theaters were being deserted for the home screen. With the help of local authorities, ciné-clubs, and cultural groups, film series (tiny "festivals") were put on in about a hundred French cities. During a week (for the original "Days" had soon become weeks) the whole population of a city was barraged with cinema. There were exhibitions on the film's history and technique, stars visited the city, posters were all over the streets. There were showings of unreleased new French films with the film-makers participating in discussions. There were showings of short films, of old classics, of films for children to which were invited the pupils of all the schools and high schools. Shooting crews pretended to work in the streets, attracting the attention of crowds. There were contests for shopwindows on cinematic themes, masked balls, sales of film books in the bookstores.

After five or six years, a certain weariness crept in. Difficulties within the trade arose—mainly because the films selected by "Les Journées" were chosen for their quality, while the industry wanted to show the most commercial films. Finally the industry people lost their interest in this kind of uncertain campaign against the crisis; they pointed out that although box-office returns went up, it was only in one city and for a few weeks.

But the Association's work seemed to the government to have cultural value, and it continued its subsidies for other activities suggested by Barbin. One was the organization in France of "Weeks" devoted to films of a given foreign country; in exchange, weeks of French films were sent abroad. Others were the Tours and Annecy festivals.

Film from Tours: François Reichenbach's UN COEUR GROS COMME ÇA.

Tours came about from the usual lucky concatenation of circumstances. Barbin was looking for new activities; in Tours, he had met local authorities who shared some of his preoccupations. The Prefet (highest official of the Departement), the Mayor of the city, and the Curator of the local museum were convinced of the cultural importance of the cinema. They were backing cultural manifestations in a booming city. Moreover, the national government was seeking at that time to rescue the short film industry—which was having its own crisis. The policy of premiums to outstanding shorts had just been instituted,* and the government needed a prestige event which would attract public attention and create emulation and competition among producers.

At the beginning, finding films was a problem. Barbin contacted all the embassies, worked through French critics attending festivals, wrote all over the world to directors, friends, newspaper correspondents. Now, the festival is so well known that films flood in from everywhere. In its early years, the festival used to invite members of the profession to come; now they come at their own expense, and in growing numbers. Its success in stimulating short film making in France is undeniable. Even outside of France, it has drawn public attention to original films, and has even helped nonconformist film-makers having trouble with state producing companies (in the socialist countries) or powerful sponsors (in the capitalist countries).

The festival has flourished because of material support from three main sources: the public, which attends in large numbers—so large, in fact, that showings now have to be repeated; the national government, through its support of the Association; and the local government, which provides monetary aid as well as providing some hotel and restaurant facilities. (The price of this last is that the final selection of films shown is in the hands of a local jury, which has led to conflicts and deprived the festival of some films which were thought too extreme.) The real secret of its success, however, is the existence of a public passionately interested in films—the students and film enthusiasts, members of ciné-clubs, journalists, film-makers. Plus, of course, a dedicated band of organizers. Barbin's staff is in fact very small, but they are crazy enough about the cinema to see films by the hundreds, invent subtitles, compile biographies, publish a newspaper, have an answer to every question, and sleep only between two and six in the morning, so that everything goes smoothly.

It has been done here in France, it could certainly be tried elsewhere. Or could it?

*A jury of film critics, art-theatre owners, and producers, plus representatives from the Centre National, educational organizations, and governmental agencies connected with culture and education—plus Barbin—view all shorts produced before December 31 of a given year. They select 120 films which receive a "label" of quality together with a premium of $2,000. After a second viewing of these, the best 50 are awarded prizes ranging from $2,000 to $16,000-20,000. Altogether a total of $900,000 is distributed, derived from the very heavy admissions tax (about one-third of the ticket price). Marker's *Dimanche à Pekin* and *La Jetée*, Varda's *O Saisons O Chateaux* and *Du Coté de la Cote*—in fact all the best shorts that have come out of France in the past ten years—have been awarded labels and prizes. Sometimes shorts get labels though they do not deserve them; but I don't think there has been any case when an outstanding short did not win a prize. The list for 1965, for example, included Lenica's *A*, Klein's *Cassius le Grand*, and Borowczyk's *Les Jeux des Anges*.

VIVIAN LASH

Experimenting with Freedom in Mexico

To follow up Manuel Michel's report on the general condition of the contemporary Mexican cinema [FQ, Summer, 1965] we present below an account of the contest held recently to stimulate new film-making.

An Indian with a large sombrero taking a siesta on a sunny afternoon. A *charro* in an embroidered suit and an elegant sombrero performing feats on horseback. A *mariachi* with a sombrero both large and elegant straight-facedly playing a guitar, singing songs of frustrated love. A *campesino,* his burro at his side, framed by a cloudy sky and a many-armed cactus. All mustached. All manly. All picturesque. This is the Mexican to many Americans. And to many Mexicans as well. Witness Mexican films.

But, as if this weren't bad enough, Mexican film-makers have added through the years the clichés of the worst American films, those that turn cinema into a world peopled by square-jawed pretty heros, well-dressed girls who dance and sing, and impossibly banal plots. (As Hal Wallis once said, "Good movies are escape. What d'you want to do—depress people?")

Almost since the birth of the Mexican film industry, production has been in the grip of a small group of millionaires who have given the impression that the qualifications for entry into the national cinema syndicate are vast wealth and a sophomoric mind, along with a philosophy of commercialism-before-everything. The result has been an endless succession of dreadful films which have set before the half-illiterate Mexican public a series of heavily censored platitudes, escape devices, and cheap sentimentalism. Cinematographic sensitivity has therefore been deadened in a vast majority of this public, which now also goes in a big way for American movies.

At the same time, the new university-educated generation in Mexico has gotten an inkling that cinema can be a delightful and/or artistic form of communication with infinite possibilities, and has formed a network of cine-clubs, mainly related to the National University in Mexico City. These are the only places where good foreign films and the few passable national ones can be seen. (And can be seen uncut!) Moreover, three years ago the University established a school of cinematographic studies, to which wistfully would-be directors have flocked.

This new generation of cinephiles has made possible the first Experimental Cinema Contest for full-length films in Mexico. Announced in August, 1964, and judged in July, 1965, the contest was organized by the Technical and Manual Section of the Syndicate of Workers of Cinematographic Production (STPC). This organization obtained the coöperation of many different branches of production, and when the contest officially opened, 32 groups registered films; 18 finished them, all in 35mm.

The principal reason for this dwindling was the enormous economic sacrifice implied. Only a handful of the prospective directors found producers willing to invest. Many relied on private funds, sometimes provided by themselves, with friends chipping in. All of the technical workers, actors, and writers gave their services with no remuneration; all they had was the hope of eventual commercial exploitation if they won.

Filming took place, in most cases, on only two or three days of the week, due to the fact that most of the participants had other obligations related to earning their living.

Five of the groups were lucky enough to be backed by Manuel Barbachano, producer of some of the rare good films that have been done

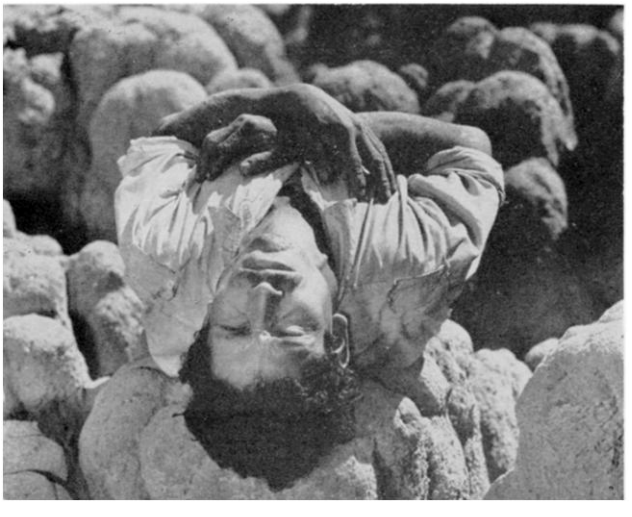
in Mexico: *Raíces, Torero* and Buñuel's *Nazarín* are among them. These groups' films were integrated into one film which lasts about three and a half hours and won third prize in the contest—*Amor, Amor, Amor.*

The directors of the films entered in the contest include a journalist, four theatrical directors, two architects, three television directors, a photographer and three directors of commercial movies, two cinema syndicate officials, and a critic. All of them are vitally interested in making films and have been for some time. But none of them have been able to do anything about this desire, due to the hermetic group of directors and producers in control of the Mexican movie industry.

That is why the term "experimental" has a special meaning in this contest. It should be interpretated as a new-found liberty, the liberty to break conventions, to destroy myths and clichés—the traditions of Mexican cinema—to uncover authentic Mexican elements, but to give them their place among human elements. "We don't believe in a national soul," said one of the participants, "we just believe in soul."

The revolution in cinematographic values implicit here can be seen even in the spoken language used in the most important films entered; some of the new directors have dared to use an "intellectual" language never before heard in Mexican movies, but have presented a truly Mexican vernacular heretofore also avoided. The idea of these directors has been to present national characteristics, but profound ones, intimately linked with the complex Mexican culture—and language. The fact that a good many of the experimental films are based on stories by important young Mexican writers is significant of this. Rarely before has the national cinema made use of Mexican or other good Latin-American writers.

LA FORMULA SECRETA *by Rubén Gamez.*



What about the films themselves? The following comments about the four prize-winners may give an idea of what resulted on celluloid.

La Fórmula Secreta, *(Secret Formula,* originally called *"Kokakola en La Sangre")* directed by Rubén Gámez.

If the contest had produced nothing else worth while, this would have been sufficient. With an uncanny mastery of his camera (which he manned himself), Gámez presents a series of images which he links symbolically and exploits poetically.

From the opening shots, with the camera rapidly, obsessively circling the Zócalo (the main square of Mexico City with the Cathedral on one side), framing, fencing in, emprisoning, accompanied by music of Vivaldi, the film is new, authentic and exciting. Gámez has invented his own rules, following a mysterious road far beyond any of the other directors. His is the only film which doesn't even vaguely suggest elements inserted to *épater les bourgeois.* No pseudo-intellectual touches or snob-appeal casts were necessary. *La Fórmula Secreta* rides on pure cinematographic talent.

The text, by the great Mexican writer Juan Rulfo, and the music, by Stravinsky, Vivaldi, and Velasquez, mesh completely with the images—strong Mexican faces, barren, desolate land expanses, the Indian-faced angels of the church of Tonantzintla, the butchering of a cow.

The film is full of cruelty and satire, a wealth of observations based on a wealth of thoughts, expressing themselves sometimes as surrealist fantasy, sometimes as harsh realism. It is an

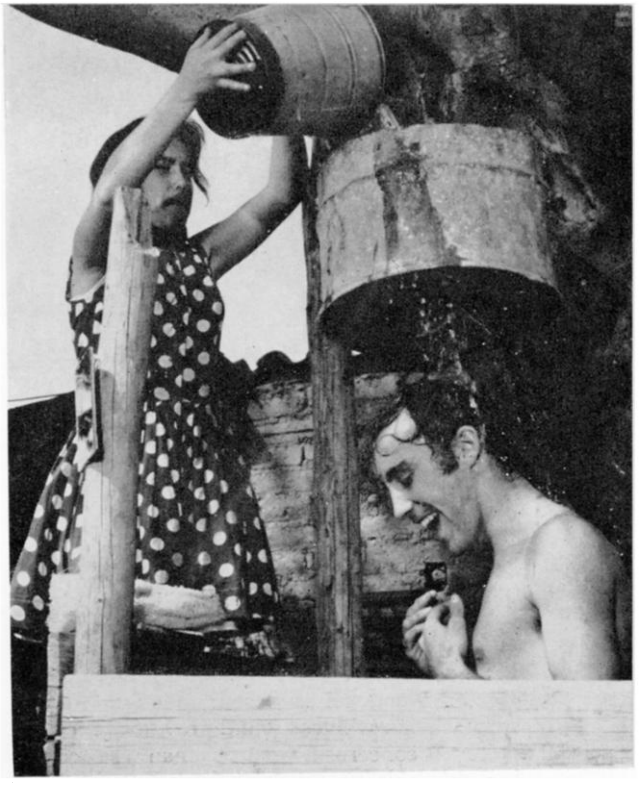
intellectual film and it clearly shows the influence of Luis Buñuel.

Photographically speaking, *La Fórmula Secreta* is the only film in the contest which can be called truly experimental. At the same time it reveals a director who already possesses a professional mastery of cinematographic elements. Gámez also has a good deal to say.

When asked what had been the most valuable experience for him in the making of this film, Gámez said that it had been the realization that Mexican cinema "has not yet gotten to the roots of Mexican reality." It is evident that his own search for this reality has led him to explore with humor many Mexican myths and clichés. He is particularly merciless with the clergy, the obsessive Mexican mother-figure, and American exploitation of Mexico.

It should be mentioned that Gámez' film is the only medium-length one in the contest, lasting only 45 minutes.

Besides being chosen the best film, it also won the awards for best direction, best editing, and best musical adaptation.



EN ESTE PUEBLO NO HAY LADRONES.

En Este Pueblo No Hay Ladrones, (*In This Town There Are No Thieves*) directed by Alberto Isaac.

Here the human message comes through wrapped in typical Mexican clothes, in a very different way from Gámez'.

The plot is based on a story by Columbian writer Gabriel García Márquez, concerning a lazy no-goodnik who lives by his looks and decides to steal the billiard balls from the local tavern; the film traces the reactions of the townspeople, including the pregnant older woman with whom he lives and who supports him by taking in washing, and comments ironically on social conditions, as well as on the human relationships within them.

Isaac has taken a cast teeming with well-known artists, writers, and other Mexican VIP's, including Luis Buñuel himself, and has gotten them to act, even if it be for a moment. He has given attention to gestures, expressions, and intonations. In one scene, for instance, the main character combs his hair lengthily before a mirror, each gesture beautifully circumscribing his personality.

The only major defect of *En Este Pueblo* is its often exasperating slowness. It placed second and also won prizes for best photography, best soundtrack, best adaptation, best musical theme, best actor, and best actress.

Amor, Amor, Amor, the film in five episodes by five directors, won third prize.

Las Dos Helenas, (The Two Helens) directed by José-Luis Ibañez, is based on a superficial story by Carlos Fuentes and involves a *ménage à trois* contrivedly influenced by *Jules and Jim.* The film exhibits a particularly vacuous and stagey Mexico City beatnik element. The most serious flaw is a jumpy camera and excessively rapid montage.

Lola de mi Vida, (*Lola of My Life*) directed by Miguel Barbachano, brings us little and muffs, through awkward direction, its main point: a maid from the provinces is desired by

Pilar Pellicer in TAJIMARA.

a tamale-vendor and a fellow maid, and, preserving herself from their advances, yields to those of a lecherous passerby. The dialogue is good at times, but the film is a failure.

La Sunamita, (*The Sunamite*) directed by Héctor Mendoza, is based on an interesting story which revolves around provincial Mexican mores. It concerns a young woman who marries her old uncle on his death bed, as a formality for inheriting his fortune, and then, as he revives, finds herself obliged to obey his lustful and now legal demands. The real theme of *La Sunamita,* (one who obeys tradition and orthodoxy), is moral deflowerment. That the idea gets across at all is mainly due to the author (Inés Arredondo), not to the director, who hasn't the foggiest idea of how to use his camera.

Un Alma Pura, (*A Pure Soul*) directed by Juan Ibañez, also takes a Carlos Fuentes story as script, and turns it into a film which seems a caricature of New Wave techniques—"the living camera," intertwining naked bodies badly reminiscent of *Hiroshima, mon amour,* with emphasis given to navels, asides directed to the camera, etc. In the dual role of incestuous sister and the mistress, Arabella Arbenz (daughter of an ex-president of Guatemala) proved one of the worst actresses we have seen in a long time. In a film dealing with frustration and anguish, she is incapable of communicating either of these feelings. The mascara keeps running blackly and splotchily down her stony face, and it all seems gratuitous ugliness, meaning neither emotion nor image. The suicides at the end seem as inexplicable and unjustifiable as the passionless love between the sister and brother. (Ironically, Miss Arbenz herself recently committed suicide in Columbia.)

Un Alma Pura was filmed in Mexico City and New York. The only faintly amusing sequence was made at a party in New York attended by notables such as Jules Feiffer.

Tajimara, directed by Juan José Gurrola, is the best component of *Amor, Amor, Amor,* and shows surprising maturity of direction. At first viewing it overcomes the audience with clever montage, frank themes, and a shiny-veneered atmosphere. A hysterical, almost chaotic quality runs through this bitter commentary on the death of love, intertwining the stories of two couples, one of them a sister and brother (incest is obviously one of the favorite themes in the contest). The flashback musical theme, "Give Me a Kiss to Build a Dream On," points up the illusory side of love and the determined denial of real communication and tenderness. The unattainable person seems to be the only one who can effectively inspire love, and even then only for a few tense moments. There are several love scenes between the main couple (of an eroticism never shown on a Mexican screen), which are shot through with hysterical laughter—in several episodes of *Amor, Amor, Amor,* the sexual act seems to provoke laughter. But the treatment of incest is done here with admirable good taste, sadness, and beauty.

Gurrola is one of the most talented theatrical directors in Mexico and seems to have taken to the camera with the same aptitude.

El Viento Distante, (*The Distant Wind*—fourth prize winner) was directed by Salomón Laiter, Manuel Michel, and Sergio Véjar; it consists of three parts, all of them based on stories by José Emilio Pacheco. The last one, *Encuentro,* (*Meeting*) directed by Sergio Véjar, is a generalization about Mexican adolescents of the "popular" type, and although it suggests typical relationships between fathers and sons, it falls into the cliché trap, with easy and dull camera work. *El Parque Hondo,* (*The Deep Park*) by

Salomón Laiter, is a direct, simple story which manages to communicate the world of a child through the narration of a small anecdote. The chasm separating this world from the adult world, as well as the petty and major injustices suffered by children, are suggested briefly and succinctly. The photography is honest without being extraordinary.

The middle episode, *Tarde de Agosto,* (*August Afternoon*) directed by Manuel Michel, is the most capable one, though Michel's treatment includes a montage sequence which seems artificial and narration which sounds overly literary at moments. The anecdote effectively communicates, however, the painful passing from childhood to adolescence, and the first major disillusionment of a 14-year-old boy.

Among the remaining eight films, two were provincial melodramas, one was about a Catholic orphanage, one an oratorical existential flop, a couple were television-serial-type productions; there was a Porfirian period "social message" film, and two fairly good features set in modern Mexico City.

One of these, *Amelia,* is concerned with the death of love in marriage and has good moments, despite ineffectual acting by the hero. Its music, a combination of a theme by Cimarosa and an original jazz score, won the prize for best original music.

The other, *El Día Comenzó Ayer,* (*Day Began Yesterday*), is a comment on the impossibility of love in an ambiance riddled with superficiality and auto-destruction, and the impossibility of integrity in a city where success depends on unscrupulousness. *El Día* shows the influences of *The Cousins* and *La Dolce Vita,* especially in two party sequences. In one a puppy is tossed into a bowl full of piranhas; in the other a voluptuous guest performs a slow and stylized striptease.

Certain elements were repeated in several films and inspired one local critic to compile statistics on how many of the films contain: nude scenes (usually strictly forbidden in Mexican movies); awakening lovers who reach out to an empty pillow beside them; *Dolce-Vita* parties; long walks through Mexico City; the use of old colonial architecture for settings; hysterical laughter; incest; suggestions of homosexuality; and so on. These statistics were surprising and amusing but in the long run unfair. Even when two directors happened to coincide in thematic or visual preoccupations, they treated them in an entirely different way. That they may have similar preoccupations is due to the fact that they all live within the same culture and, in their first filming attempt, all had the same timidity with the camera, the same temptation to use obviously filmable elements. The best films, however, are highly original achievements, while the very worst are no worse than the standard product of "official" Mexican cinema.

Manuel Michel's TARDE DE AGOSTO.

The organization of the contest undeniably had its faults. The jury, for one thing, was badly chosen. Each juror represented an institution; some of them were obvious partisans of certain films. During the press showings, some of the groups organized cat-calling at films of enemy groups. Many complained that the first-prize winner was far shorter than any of the others.

Strangely enough, the national press was indifferent or superficial about so important a cultural event. More interest was shown by European press and television—French television taped extensive interviews with the directors months ago. Moreover, several of the films have been invited to participate in international film festivals.

When asked about his future as a movie director in a recent interview, second-prize winner

Alberto Isaac, who is a journalist, cartoonist, movie critic, writer, and former Olympic swimmer, stated:

"That depends on the proposals that I receive and on the liberty that I would have for filming. I will definitely not agree to enter the vicious circle of our national cinema. If they accept a screenplay that I already have and if they let me shoot it with complete freedom, I will fully dedicate myself to the profession; if not, I shall wait until in the next contest I can realize another film to my own satisfaction."

The obstacles to Isaac's realization of his planned film on a commercial basis, within the framework of the national syndicate, will probably be created by directors within the syndicate who fear new elements in the industry and openly admit that "we will not let anyone take away our modus vivendi." (—Alejandro Galindo, General Secretary of the Syndicate of Directors)

To which the experimental directors answer that they wish to take nothing away from anyone, that they simply want to *complement* national cinema—by providing films for the segment of the population that is not cinematographically retarded.

The objectives of the experimental film contest were technical and artistic, not commercial. But a group of talented young directors has come to light. Given the chance, they will provide fresh blood for a national industry that is dying of anemia, to the profit of everyone concerned (except perhaps the Old Wave sophomoric millionaires). The Mexican government itself, cognizant of the present sad state of affairs and naturally anxious for the cinema industry to get back on its feet, has watched the contest with interest and sympathy. It has even promised to influence the Cinematographic Bank to help experimental films. Later on, the government will probably give more direct aid.

The contest has been a victory.

PAUL J. SHARITS

Red, Blue, Godard

Godard's first color film was *Une Femme Est Une Femme* (*A Woman Is A Woman*, 1961); two years later he dealt with color for the second time in *Le Mépris* (*Contempt*). In both works the colors are dominantly primaries ("In *Le Mépris* I was influenced by modern art: straight color, 'pop' art. I tried to use only the five principal colors." – Godard in the *New York Film Bulletin* [No. 46; 1964], p. 13).

Red and blue are the colors appearing most frequently in both *A Woman Is A Woman* and *Contempt*; the recurrence of these hues in a variety of contexts suggests thematic implications. The films are also related in that their primary themes are love triads (a motif which later became geometrically equilateral in *The Married Woman*); in both, female nudity has the important function of finalizing a precarious relationship. Both are parodies, the former more obvious and comic while the latter is complex, oblique, and tragic.

In each film there is a difference in rhythm which corresponds to the difference of sense. *A Woman Is A Woman* is quick, choppy, compact and widely varied in locations while *Contempt*, although thematically complex, is much more slowly paced, has fewer locations and much longer development of individual sequences. Along with these changes in sequential methodology in the latter film, there is a change in the handling of the camera itself. For the most part, fragmented editing is replaced with full-length

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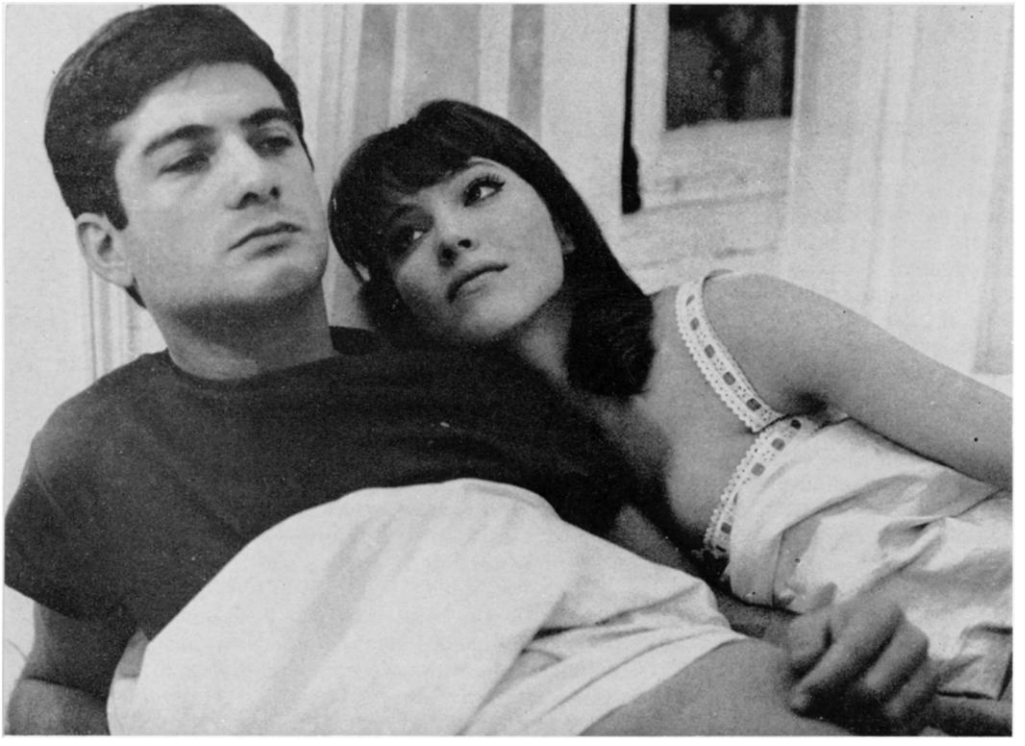
takes and camera movements are slow, smooth, and calculated. In *Contempt*, this not only facilitates the tragic sense but is of importance to the work's visual construction. It is well known that working in color often creates new problems for the intelligent director—an excellent description of these problems was given by Antonioni when he was interviewed by Godard. (See the English edition of *Cahiers du Cinema*—(No. 1, 1966, pp. 28-9.) Godard, through his experience with *A Woman Is A Woman*, seemed to learn that if color was to function thematically, he would have to extend the length of single shots and slow down his camera movements to allow the viewer adequate time for concentrating on the composition of colors.

Even a simple and incomplete inventory of the recurring colors in *A Woman Is A Woman* indicates the importance of hue in relation to characterization and narrative development. Angela, the character who motivates the film's action, is first seen in a red nightclub; her eyelids are shadowed blue. She is shown wearing a white coat and lives in a white apartment with her lover Emile. Camille and Paul, in *Contempt*, also live in a white apartment. In both cases, the white seems to underscore conditions of neutrality and/or situations whose final outcome is still ambivalent—Angela very much wants a child by Emile, but Emile, who is cool to the idea of Angela having a baby, wears dominantly blue clothing. The neutral ground of the apartment contains a balance of red and blue objects: window awnings, clothespins, drinking cups in the bathroom, a sports poster on the wall in the living room, flashlights, a red lampshade and a blue bedspread. Seen through windows are blue and red neon signs that consistently comment upon the emotional climate of each scene which occurs in the apartment. Angela is also characterized as indecisive at several points; one time she has on one red and one blue stocking, and another time she wears a red and blue plaid dress. There are red dots on her underpants. After being repeatedly refused by Emile, Angela goes to Emile's friend Albert to conceive. Albert, the film's straight man, wears grey and feels no real affection for Angela; he is, however, delighted to help her out. At this point Angela is wearing a blue dress and has switched to a black coat. When she returns to Emile, after having intercourse with Albert, she still wears blue and the dots on her underpants are also blue. When she informs Emile, however, the action is still ambivalent and Angela again wears the white coat. The film ends with Angela and Emile in bed, still under a blue blanket; both are sad and confused. Then Angela thinks of a way to solve the dilemma: red neon light pulsates into the apartment and Angela takes off her nightgown for a willing Emile.

Very rarely, since Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*, has color in a commercial feature been used except to add a market value. When it has been dealt with at all, it has been used primarily for the enhancement of mood in separate scenes. Godard has attempted a more ambitious function for hue in *A Woman Is A Woman*: color is used as a leitmotif which parallels and comments upon the narrative theme.

If a color leitmotif is to be used, some system for structuring the colors must be created. In regard to the red and blue motif of *A Woman Is A Woman*, Kabuki make-up authority Masaru Kobayashi's comments are important: ". . . the basic colors employed in kumadori are red and blue. Red is warm and attractive. Blue, the opposite, is the color of villains . . ." *(The Film Sense*, p. 137). These stylized, symbolic color values are more than likely formalizations of direct sensual experience, formalizations based upon relationships of hue sensation and inner emotional states (what Wassily Kandinsky called "der innere Klang"). Eisenstein felt that these alleged correspondences of sensation and emotion could not be the basis for the systematic organization of color due to the high degree of variation in subjective responses persons have to hues; instead, he suggested that each film create its own "functional" system of organization, using arbitrarily chosen but consistently recurring colors or values. Godard's color system is in accord with Eisenstein's theory insomuch as it is "functional" and its colors do not act upon the viewer in a directly sensual way. Godard admitted this himself



Jean-Claude Brialy and Anna Karina in UNE FEMME EST UNE FEMME.

when he made the following comment about a film in which each composition (through filtering and juxtaposition of hues) creates color "auras" that *establish* emotional responses in its viewers: "I was very impressed with the new Antonioni, *The Red Desert*: the color in it was completely different from what I have done: in *Le Mépris* the color was *before* the camera but in his film, it was *inside* the camera." (*New York Film Bulletin*, loc. cit.) On the other hand, Godard's dominant thematic hues were very likely not chosen arbitrarily since they have such obvious symbolic references to emotional states.

Contempt follows the pattern developed in *A Woman Is A Woman* but where in the former color loosely parallels the narrative development, in the latter the letimotif is more fully conceived, more complex, more visually apparent and becomes, in itself, a formative theme. Another difference in the film is that the blue and red system of the first is inverted in *Contempt*. While Angela sings of love in the nightclub of *A Woman Is A Woman*, a revolving colored spotlight casts first blue, then red light on her face. Immediately after the credits in *Contempt*, Godard again used a filtered effect: Camille and Paul are lying in bed talking about their love for each other; the shot is a deep red monochrome which abruptly shifts to "normal" polychrome; even in polychrome the scene remains warm in tonality (dominant oranges and yellows) but, as the camera makes a slow overhead dolly, the tone becomes cooler; then the shot shifts to monochrome again—this time to deep blue. In both films these filtered shots establish color "keys"; in *Contempt* this prepares us for the over-all movement of mood from warmth (red) to ambivalence (white, pink) to coldness (of course, blue), or, literally, from love to contempt.

Paul, a French detective story writer, has been asked by the repulsive, extroverted American film producer Jerome Prokosch (Jerry) to come to Rome to rewrite the script for his production of *The Odyssey*. Jerry is not pleased with the way in which his director, (the real) Fritz Lang, is insisting on filming the book (i.e.,

the way it was written). Jerry wants to modernize the epic by inserting into it factors of causality (the very thing Godard consistently suppresses in his work). Even by accepting the assignment, Paul makes the first step in a series of steps which lead to his total self-demoralization. In these first scenes, Jerry wears a blue coat and a red tie; he drives a red sports car. Jerry is composed of both blue (dominant) and red so we may infer that the attraction he will feel toward Paul's wife, Camille, will be lust rather than love. Paul wears much the same colors (dominant grey and bits of blue) throughout the film and this is evocative of his passiveness and apparent lack of emotion. Camille, the most complex character, first appears in navy blue and white and wears a blue band over her blond hair; she wears the same color in her last appearance, and, since she is in a constant process of changing mental states and garment colors throughout the film, this implies a cyclic development. Godard, in his treatment of Camille's garment hues, seems to have broken from what he may have felt was a too-obvious color system. Camille, because she is in love with her husband at the beginning of the film, "should" be wearing red; however, the cyclic motif that occurs in regard to Camille's development has a particular irony that befits the irony of the film in general, particularly the ironic paralleling of *Contempt's* development with that of the Homeric *Odyssey*. Francesca, Jerry's secretary and lover, while a minor character, supports the color key as a whole. Normally she is seen wearing a yellow sweater and grey skirt, but, during a scene in which she arouses Paul's desire, she changes to a red sweater.

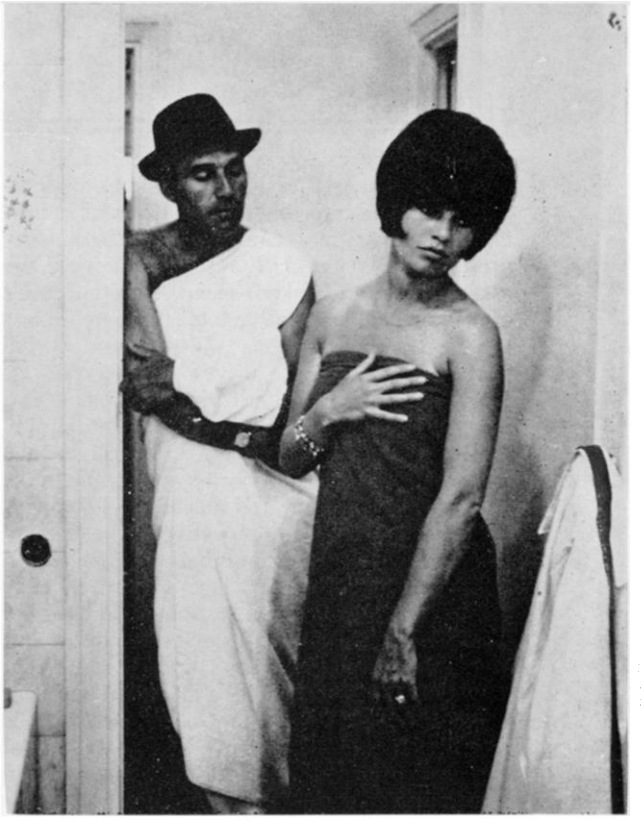
Environments are equal in importance to garments. Jerry's nearly defunct film studios have red and blue awnings and his projection studio is, like Jerry himself (and like his reconditioned Greek temple in Capri), red on the outside but blue in the interior. Inside the projection studio, where Jerry shows Paul rushes of Lang's footage, there are red-orange cushions on blue seats, the ashtrays are red as is Lang's pen and the projectionist's shirt, and the studio secretary wears a pink skirt and a blue jacket. In the rushes we see white statues of Odysseus' guardian deity Athena (whose eyes have been painted bright red), Odysseus' enemy Neptune (whose eyes and and mouth have been painted blue), and Penelope (whose eyes are blue, mouth red, and who is in front of a brilliant yellow wall). This footage, which Jerry rejects, is used by Godard who cuts the gods into the main action of *Contempt* at major turning points in the drama. The first example of this occurs toward the beginning of the film, immediately after the scene in the projection studio. Jerry suggests that Camille drive with him to his mansion and that Paul take a cab; Paul consents to this idea, over Camille's objection, and we see a momentary shot of Neptune. That Neptune is the deity of the sea is important as the Mediterranean later becomes the ultimate image of Camille and Paul's disintegrated relationship.

Paul arrives late at Jerry's and Camille construes that Paul has intentionally done this to give Jerry time to seduce her. They are outside at a table in Jerry's garden; the tablecloth is red and the wine glasses are blue. Camille is naturally disgusted with Paul but he doesn't seem to apprehend her reason—it is this inapprehension of the obvious which creates the tension that carries *Contempt's* theme to its conclusion. However, at this point there is still a degree of hope for Camille and Paul—as they leave Jerry's, holding hands, a shot of Athena briefly appears.

When the couple return to their home, which is one of a massive group of apartments, they are compositionally overpowered by the dehumanized environment. The interior of their apartment is painted white and is incompletely furnished except for a few pieces of bright blue and red furniture. Camille's reflection that she will hang red velvet drapes over the yet bare windows is indicative of her continuing love for Paul even while she is angry. The warm sunlight which floods the rooms intensifies the overall whiteness, and, against this neutral brilliance, colors and objects tend to become visually isolated, enhancing their imagistic importance. Again, as in *A Woman Is A Woman*, the

equal distribution of warm and cool hues emphasizes the equal probability of the action going either toward red or toward blue. In this very extended sequence, the play of color in costume changes and in environmental location, the virtuosity of the use of camera movement and the wide screen, all combine to deepen the sense of increasing interpersonal isolation. There is a gradual shift in the tonality of the lighting from warm, at the beginning of the scene, to a cool blue cast, toward the end of the scene. In the living room there is a red couch and two red chairs on a white rug. In another part of the room there are two blue facing chairs, between them a lamp with a large white shade. In a vase there are red flowers. Paul is wearing a white towel and Camille a yellow bathrobe. They bicker; Paul wants to know why Camille is angry. Camille goes into her bedroom, which has blue drapes over the window and a yellow spread on the bed. Camille puts on a black wig she has just bought; Paul dislikes it. Camille becomes affectionate, puts on a red robe, lies on the red couch and becomes playfully seductive. Later they sit in the blue chairs and Camille tells Paul she no longer loves him. She is acting at this point but later, when she removes the wig, her words will cease being lies. They become affectionate momentarily but Camille discards the wig and the mood becomes strained again. She changes to a green dress and puts the wig back on. The green dress would seem to indicate hatred since green is the complementary of red; this is borne out by Camille's behavior. Back in the blue chairs, Camille again tells Paul she does not love him; even though she is still wearing her wig, it is nevertheless obvious that her feelings are seriously waning. This fluctuating emotional state is powerfully evoked by the otherwise irrational turning on and off of the light which sits between them.

Camille and Paul are invited by Jerry to accompany him to Capri where Lang is doing the shooting for the film. Camille is dressed in pink (faded red) and grey (the first note of passiveness), Paul wears white and blue and Jerry has on a grey suit with a red and black tie. They



Michel Piccoli and Brigitte Bardot: LE MÉPRIS.

are on the deck of Jerry's boat, from which the cyclops episode of *The Odyssey* is being shot; Paul is sitting in a blue chair. Jerry asks Camille to return to his temple-turned-home with him but she leaves the decision up to Paul; he consents, failing her again. Camille and Jerry leave in a speedboat which disappears from sight in a symmetrical shot, the top of which is blue sky and the bottom, blue sea. It is as if the boat had been swallowed by the water; Neptune's kingdom now becomes the image of Camille and Paul's fate.

When Paul returns to the temple with Lang, he sees Camille kissing Jerry and seems to partially realize the seriousness of the situation. He tells Jerry he is quitting but even now he won't state the actual reason and says that he simply does not care for scriptwriting. He then looks for Camille and finds her sun-bathing nude on the temple roof. She is lying on a yellow robe

and next to her is a discarded red robe—discarded for good. She is now numb and when she says to Paul that she is barren of all feeling (she wears nothing) she is no longer acting. She puts on the yellow robe (perhaps a regaining of feeling, indicative of the beginning of a new cycle—one which excludes Paul) and they walk down, descend, to a ledge overlooking the sea. The composition of this series of shots is brilliant; as they get closer to the water, the relatively warm composition changes as progressively larger areas of the screen are filled with the blueness of the sea. Camille says, "I'll never forgive you," removes her robe and dives into the sea. While she swims, Paul falls asleep (Godard may have exaggerated Paul's passiveness here!); we are watching Paul sleep while we hear Camille's voice reading the letter she has written telling that she has left for Rome.

The scene is abruptly changed to Jerry, wearing a red sweater, driving Camille to Rome in his car. Camille wears the same colors as she did at the beginning of the film, implying the completion of a metamorphic cycle. Like Odysseus, she and Paul have been on a voyage, a voyage ending with the submersion of their relationship. Camille, at least, has regained her original stability—somewhat in the way that Odysseus had regained his homeland (Odysseus, in Lang's picture, wears blue when he returns to Ithaca). Jerry stops for gas and while waiting he picks a small red flower. He pulls out of the gas station in a characteristically reckless way and just before they collide into the side of a petroleum truck, we see the final words of Camille's letter while hearing the crashing sound of the collision. Then there is a cut back to the wreck—a slow dolly toward Camille and Jerry's dead bodies; cut again, to Paul, suitcase in hand, walking up the staircase of the temple at the film site where Lang is shooting the return of Odysseus. He passes Francesca (wearing blue) who is walking down the stairs; he pauses but she ignores him; Paul continues up to the roof.

Homer had ironically paralleled Odysseus' homecoming against the homecoming of Agamemnon and Godard pushes this approach to the extreme when the camera moves away from Paul. Our point of view is shifted and we are now looking through Lang's camera at Odysseus who, facing away from us, gazes across the sea toward Ithaca. Silence. The camera slowly passes Odysseus and finally fixes on the sea.

This study by no means exhausts the wealth of color imagery in Godard's two works. Due to the relative inaccessibility of the films, there are necessarily many gaps in this analysis and interpretation. It is a certainty, however, that Godard has shown a new way of effectively using color, at least in commercial film-making. (Stan Brakhage's *Anticipation of the Night*, made several years before *A Woman Is A Woman*, has as complex and systematic use of color as Godard's films.) Within the realm of the commercial film, Godard has accomplished the unique task of casting colors effectively in major dramatic roles.

ALBERT SONNENFELD

A Note on Linguistic Morality

Two recent train movies with World War II settings drew enthusiastic crowds of examination-weary students during successive runs at Princeton theaters. *The Train* and *Von Ryan's Express* once again drew my attention to the naive and xenophobic attitude of many film producers toward the problem of "foreign" characters and their embarrassing but necessary presence on the soundtrack. *The Train* simply avoided the problem: all the central characters spoke English,

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while those on the periphery of the action were entitled to their native languages, or at least to heavy accents when it was absolutely essential that they be understood by the audience. However, there were subtle gradations among the stars. Burt Lancaster was the hero, not only because he was the best known of the actors involved, but because he spoke with the purest American tones. Only an occasional "Monsieur" or a hesitantly Gallic pronunciation of the name "Jean" intruded to remind us that he was not a national hero but a daredevil *cheminot* dedicated to following M. Malraux's edicts on preserving "le patrimoine national" from exportation. Jeanne Moreau, better known to the patrons of the art-cinema circuit than to the audience attracted to *The Train*, was supposed to be *sympathique*; she did, after all, lie to save our hero from arrest. But Lancaster is essentially a loner; his monomaniacal protective lust for the art treasures allows no measure of affection for the hotel-owner. Thus, Jeanne Moreau retained her accent; her make-up and costuming accented her plain looks—the famous upper lip did not seem in the least provocative. And wasn't there something morally equivocal in her profession? An inn-keeper with a French accent! No, this is no companion for the American hero who mispronounces both French and German place-names just the way we all do. And finally the villain. Who did play the most complex character in the film? I don't remember, and this is in itself significant. But even more revealing is the transformation of the German officer from art-lover to fanatic. He is a new Captain Ahab. Starting as a reasonable, sensitive career officer (Will he be attracted to the spinsterish museum curator who could use a virile companion?) and ending as a Nazi fanatic whose white whale is a white train, his speech patterns, at least for his American audience, degenerate from the cultured, virtually unaccented speech of the opening museum scene to the heavily teutonic consonants of his final attempt to requisition a convoy: "Aowt uvv ze trücks," he screams convulsively. As an accompaniment to this linguistic moralizing, the alert viewer cannot help but notice the crescendo of "Heil Hitler!" which punctuates the officer's actions. These are no longer Prussian gentlemen doing their duty reluctantly; these are Nazis pure and simple, the enemies of Burt Lancaster, and their shouts bring back the frantic "Achtung!" and "Gott in Himmel!" which filled the balloons of World War II comic books.

Von Ryan's Express is both more subtle and more obvious. There is the good Italian, and I know he is good because I remember his name. The titles proclaimed: "And introducing Sergio Fantoni." He is also handsome, with an eyepatch that implies he has fought bravely, whereas the bad Italian is fat and clearly unworthy for combat. But the real moral judgment is made long before we have time to speculate on characterization. In the opening scene where Fantoni shouts his superior's orders at the assembled British soldiers, he does so in English! And so it will be throughout the film. The new star is the interpreter for our side; he will join the escaping prisoners in their ride to freedom. His opposite number, clearly misnamed Maggiore Della Battaglia (!), speaks only Italian, and, to make this even more obvious, is framed by subtitles. "What do they think this is, a foreign picture?" a student remarked in the row behind me. But the subtitles have their own moralizing function. A long stream of mellifluous sounds pours from the Maggiore's lips only to be translated by a brief line of subtitle. This disparity provides a comic contrast with the crisp, and understandable, orders issued by Frank Sinatra. The hero both is and speaks American, and we can understand him more easily than the limey crew which surrounds the less attractive English officer, Trevor Howard. But what makes *Von Ryan's Express* linguistically more enterprising than *The Train* is that Mark Robson, the director, realizes that language barriers can be used for effective movie "business." The Italian train engineers (Italy has by now capitulated and joined the allies, but Battaglia becomes a "German" by shouting "Heil Hitler!" at the recaptured prisoners) don't understand the German orders; the Anglican chaplain remembers German from his student days at Heidelberg and becomes (with a slight accent, to be sure) a

convincing Hauptmann; Frank Sinatra follows the cues and foils a greedy Gestapo agent. Whereas in *The Train* the most blistering action was interrupted without hesitation for an elaborate exchange of "Heil!" there are no such histrionics on the rapid rails of *Von Ryan's Express*. Two minor relapses occur when the commander of the train and the attractive Italian collaborator converse in accented English with the escapees. But then the attempted seduction of Sinatra in the train compartment could hardly have been staged in the presence of the handsome interpreter Fantoni; and the German officer probably received his assignment of transporting the prisoners because he could issue orders to them in their language.

While *Von Ryan's Express* is far more resourceful than *The Train* in its exploitation of language, the American polyglot film still has a long way to go. As a proponent of the oral-aural method, I can only look back with philological nostalgia to the clever use which Godard made of Jean Seberg's incorrigible Iowa twang in *A bout de souffle*, to the miniature UN, minus the translators, which made communication in *The Colditz Story* so realistically difficult, and, above all, to the long-forgotten English war film where two escaped English prisoners spoke neither French nor German and were, for that reason, immediately recaptured! Sergio Fantoni's role in *Von Ryan's Express* at least taught me one optimistic lesson: a translator cannot be a traitor.

WILLIAM JOHNSON

Report from Cuba

I arrived in Cuba last fall with only the sketchiest notion of what the movie scene would be like. There is little documentation in the Western world about the Cuban cinema since 1959 (or before 1959, for that matter), aside from references to the handful of Cuban films that have been shown at international festivals. The only comprehensive survey in the United States was an article published in this magazine more than three years ago.

The present survey doesn't claim to fill the gap in any definitive way. I spent only two weeks in Cuba and had to report on other things besides movies. My direct experience of the Cuban movie scene consisted of: three theater visits, at which the Cuban movies I saw were one feature, one documentary, and two newsreels; another Cuban documentary seen at an exhibition; a tour of the movie studios, which included a viewing of two Cuban animated cartoons; a tape-recorded interview with Saul Yelín, who produced several of the early post-revolutionary movies and is now publicity director of the government movie agency; and informal discussions about movies with a number of Cubans-in-the-street.

For background information on developments in the Cuban cinema since 1959 I have relied heavily on the special retrospective issue of *Cine Cubano* published at the end of 1964.

Cuba under Castro is nominally a Communist country, but masks its communism with tropical anarchy. It is also officially anti-American, but unofficially it continues to enjoy whatever survives of American goods and practices. The same contrast between the theoretical and the real is found in the motion picture world.

All film activity—production, importation, distribution, exhibition—is controlled by the government through an agency called ICAIC (Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos), which was founded in March 1959, only a little more than two months after Castro's triumphant entry into Havana. Since then ICAIC has gradually expanded its activities to include newsreel

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production, an animation department, and *cinémathèque.*

Yet along with this governmental takeover there was a drive to open the Cuban cinema to wider influences. ICAIC personnel were, in the early days, recruited from cine-club members.* Filmmakers from other countries were invited to speak, teach, or make movies in Cuba. These included Jerome Stevens from the U.S. (teaching), Peter Brook and Tony Richardson from Britain (lecturing), Chris Marker from France (making *Cuba Si!* with Cuban assistant and technicians), Grigori Chukhrai from the Soviet Union and Jiri Weiss from Czechoslovakia (lecturing), José Miguel García Ascot from Mexico (making two episodes of a three-part film) and many others from both Communist and non-Communist countries. At the same time, trainee directors were sent out to work as assistants in France, Italy, East Germany, and elsewhere. One young Cuban worked as observer-assistant on Tony Richardson's production *The Girl with Green Eyes.*

This international crash program was necessary because at the outset ICAIC had only two directors with any notable training or experience in films. Tomás Gutierrez Alea (b. 1928) and Julio García Espinosa (b. 1926) had studied film-making in Rome and had made 16mm films in Cuba. They directed the first two features made after Castro came to power: *Historias de la Revolucion* (Stories of the Revolution—Gutíerrez Alea) and *Cuba Baila* (Cuba Dances—García Espinosa). The former was shown at seven festivals and won praise for its raw power.

Except for visiting foreigners, Gutíerrez Alea and García Espinosa were the only directors to make full-length features in Cuba through 1963. But in the meantime many other Cubans were gaining experience in other kinds of films. ICAIC began making regular weekly newsreels in June 1960. In 1961 it established an animation department. But the chief training ground for feature directors was in short subjects, of which more than 20 were being made each year.

Then came 1964, and what Yelín called "a year of crisis for our industry, for we gave the opportunity to eight new directors to make their first feature film—which is not an easy thing." Yelín admitted that the films were "not extraordinary"—but all of the directors have been allowed to go on and make second films. As far as I can discover, only two of these first features have had international showings of any consequence. José Massip's *La Decisíon* won a secondary prize at Karlovy Vary in 1934, and Fausto Canel's *Desarraigo* (Expulsion) was entered in the 1965 San Sebastian festival. According to Richard Craven in *Films & Filming,* the latter was one of the few entries of festival caliber.

All of the eight new directors were in their 20's or 30's; the youngest was 25. Most of them, in discussing their ideas of the film medium with *Cine Cubano* interviewers, show an awareness of the different kinds of film making that are going on in all parts of the world. They refer admiringly not only to Wajda and Rosi but also to Godard and Antonioni. *Last Year at Marienbad* may not be to their taste—but at least they have seen it. This state of affairs is one result of ICAIC's relatively open policy on importing foreign films, and its even more open policy on programming for the Cinemateca de Cuba, which was created in 1961.

There are about 520 movie theaters in Cuba, of which 130 are in Havana and its suburbs. Since ICAIC produces only about eight or nine features a year, these theaters obviously need plenty of foreign films to keep them going. While a large number of these films come from Communist countries, an equally large number come from France, Italy, Japan and other non-Communist countries.* No new American films, of course, have reached Cuba since October 1960, when the U.S. imposed its trade embargo; but ICAIC re-releases pre-embargo films from time to time. During my stay, one theater in Havana was showing *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* and Yelín told me that *Some Like It Hot* was about to be reissued.† Other non-Communist country films on release in Havana during my stay included *The Hidden Fortress, High and Low, The Seven Samurai, Divorce Italian Style, Seduced and Abandoned, Bread, Love and Jealousy, Bandits of Orgosolo, La Dolce Vita, The Eclipse, La Vie Conjugale, La Belle Américaine* and the Steve Reeves *Hercules.*

* Yelín: "At the beginning we were very strict, and we thought that everybody who worked here, even a stenographer, should love cinema."

* Yelín: "I would say that the countries from which we import most films are the Soviet Union, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia, and there is a commission now [September 1965] selecting a large group of films in England."

† Yelín: "American films are very popular. Of course, some of them are very good, and the very good films are very popular. Also the bad films sometimes are popular."

During the same period the Cinemateca was showing *Alexander Nevsky*, Bergman's *Secrets of Women*, the Garbo *Anna Karenina* and *Stagecoach.** With more than 1,000 films in its library, the Cinemateca has presented festivals of Buñuel (14 films), Dreyer (8 films), Hitchcock (15 films), and Shakespeare on the screen (13 films), among many others. While ICAIC was preparing the Cinemateca's library, it unearthed copies of DeMille's *King of Kings* and *The Sign of the Cross*; Hughes' *The Outlaw*; Hawks' *Sergeant York*; Clarence Brown's *The Eagle* (with Valentino); Antonioni's *Cronaca di un Amore*, and other which were believed lost. Also brought to light were many Tarzan films and old RKO serials, plus a large quantity of science fiction films. There doesn't seem to be anything doctrinaire about the Cinemateca.

Is there a similar catholicity in the making of films in Cuba today? The titles of many Cuban features seem to imply a certain revolutionary monotony — *In Days Like These, I Am Cuba, Cuba '58, The Young Rebel*, and so on. But once again there is a divergence between the official government line, as expressed in newsreels and certain documentaries, and the more individual line to be found in many features and short subjects. One newsreel I saw, on the Watts riots, was a skillfully synthesized piece of anti-American propaganda. The only material it had to work with on Watts itself was two stills of white policemen subduing Negro rioters. It made the most of these with masks and zoom effects. Then it slid into archive clips of Negroes clashing with police in various parts of the South, and culminated in a still of a lynching scene which, to judge by the clothes, dated from the 20's or early 30s'. The whole sequence was edited in a crescendo rhythm to match the sound track—a recording of Lena Horne singing "Now Is the Moment."

No other newsreel or documentary material I saw contained such blatant propaganda. *Ciclón* (1963), a compilation of newsreel material on the ravages of hurricane Flora, shows the government's relief efforts, with Castro himself visiting the disaster areas — but the governmental role is no more glamorized than it would be in an equivalent American disaster film. *Vaqueros de Caute* (1965) is a pleasant documentary on the cowboys of a region in eastern Cuba; in its style as well as its subject matter it owes something to the American Western, even to the extent of ending with the central character riding off into the sunset.

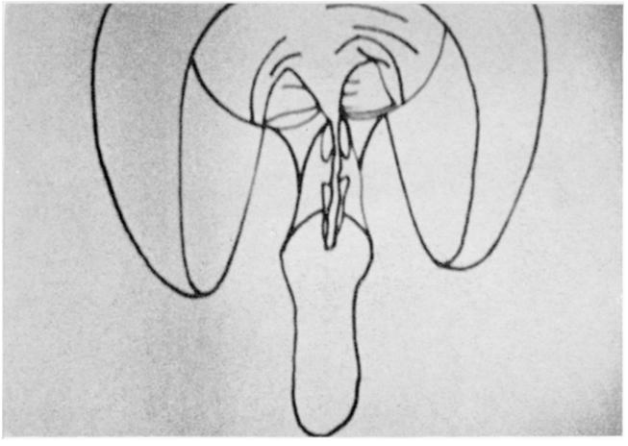
Niños

Of the two new animated cartoons I was shown, one was admittedly didactic. Entitled *Niños* (Children), it was designed to persuade parents and teachers that children should be treated with kindness rather than severity. The film is over-long, over-diffuse, and over-arty in the dream sequence which makes a harsh school teacher see the error of his ways; but it is certainly not political propaganda.

The second cartoon, *Pantomima—Amor I*, concerned a protean and rather paranoiac character who is waiting for a girl (portrayed as a still photo insert) to turn up on a date. His outline figure droops, undulates, swells, and shrinks as he soliloquizes on the possible reasons for her lateness. Eventually he decides she has stood him up, and in a paroxysm of self-pity he shoots himself in the head; but it is her temple that bleeds, and he walks away unharmed. The only flaw in this film is, again, excessive length. It is a strange and fascinating film with a hauntingly effective guitar accompaniment—and with no detectable propaganda message.

At this point it may be interesting to consult the official Cuban line on movies and politics. I asked Yelín what political considerations there were in the planning and making of feature films. He replied: "I imagine you have already heard the famous phrase—it is the only thing that is official in the field of art—that Fidel said in his speech to the intellectuals: 'In the revolution, everything; against the revolution, nothing.' Which is a very

* Yelín: "*Stagecoach* is a fantastically good film. Last night I went to see it again, and I had a very nice time." I liked the thought of Castroite Cubans rooting for 110-per-cent-American John Wayne.



PANTOMIMA—AMOR I

elastic phrase, so it will be easier to explain in concrete examples. We wouldn't accept any counter-revolutionary script, because this is an organism of the revolution, and we are not liberals in the nineteenth-century style, we are militants for the revolution. So far we have not had to refuse any script for political reasons, perhaps because none of our directors is counter-revolutionary. If there is something that is confused, we will discuss it. We have had very few problems in this area so far. This doesn't mean that the films aren't critical. They *are* critical—and when they are, we try to make them deeply critical and not superficially critical. Sometimes there is even a certain satire on things that are considered quite holy."

I next asked him whether a purely escapist film with no social implications could be made in Cuba today. "Of course, of course," he said. "In fact, they *have* been made. But it's very difficult for an artist who lives in Cuba at this period not to be touched by events. A good artist has to make things out of reality—and everything in Cuba at this time is involved with a change of political structure. Even the counter-revolutionaries are involved—they make jokes, but revolutionary jokes having to do with socialism. But a change of structure is not an easy thing since it's not only external but it happens in every human being also. Nevertheless, there are cases where a film can be made completely devoid of socialist implications."

The one Cuban feature I saw could no doubt be placed in this category. *Un Día en el Solar* (A Day in the Courtyard) is a widescreen color adaptation of a successful stage musical. It was directed by Eduardo Manet, who is probably the most European of the Cuban directors: he studied in France and Italy, and assisted Chris Marker on

Cuba Si! The story of the film is banal: it traces the dawn-to-midnight loves, hopes, jealousies, and other vicissitudes of the tenants of a working-class Havana apartment building, and nearly all the action takes place in the courtyard. An earnest search for socialistic implications could bring up the fact that all the characters are indeed working class, and that one girl sings a song entitled *"No siempre viviremos así"* (We won't always live like this); but all in all the film is far less socially minded than *West Side Story.**

Manet's direction has obviously been influenced by the French new wave, even to the extent of some flip Godardian subtitles. Unlike many directors under the same influence, however, Manet showed admirable control, with a fine awareness of when and for how long to hold the camera still. If the story had been more interesting, and if the music and dancing had risen above the level of mere pleasantness more often than it did, the film could have been immensely satisfying. Instead, it was just an enjoyable surprise from Castro's Cuba. The audience of housewives, children, and courting couples among whom I saw the film obviously didn't share the opinion of the Foreign Press Department.

Only one other Cuban feature was playing in Havana during my stay, and this was in an outlying district which my other commitments prevented me from reaching in time. Obviously, the Cuban cinema can play only a minor role in the experience of Cuban moviegoers, and those I spoke with weren't at all chauvinistic. Only one cited a Cuban film among the best he had seen recently: it was a documentary about an experimental school, and the interviewee happened to be a teacher.

Further developments in the Cuban cinema depend very heavily on practical considerations. Yelín told me that the number of features produced in 1965 and again in 1966 would be limited to eight or nine, "because we have eight or nine directors who can make one film per year."† As

*This may explain why two government press officials dismissed *Un Día en el Solar* as "terrible" when I told them I'd seen it; which led to the somewhat ludicrous situation in which I was defending the film while the combined forces of the Cuban Foreign Press Department were pouring scorn on it.

†A director is allowed one year to make a feature, from first idea to final cut. He receives the same payment no matter whether he completes the film in 11, 12, or 13 months.

for equipment, a new studio complex has been built since the revolution at Cubanacán, on the outskirts of Havana. When I visited the complex, some areas still had the desolate look of a construction site: the buildings were completed, but some were not yet fitted out for use and their approaches were not yet landscaped. There is one sound stage—the only one in Cuba—and it is quite large. (Precise statistics are hard to come by in Cuba. My studio guide told me the area of the sound stage was "around 800 square meters," the equivalent of around 8,700 square feet.) No film was currently in production, but two were scheduled to start within days. Obviously, the existence of only one sound stage sets a limit to the number of studio films that can be made annually – especially when they include films like *Un Día en el Solar,* which was shot entirely in the studio.

For studio work, Cuban film makers today enjoy one slight advantage over those of the pre-Castro era. A number of the furnishings and *objets d'art* confiscated from exiles have found their way to Cubanacán, enabling some movie sets to be graced with real crystal candelabra and goldleaf panelling.

For shooting feature films the studio uses pre-embargo Mitchells and one Soviet-made camera. Other Soviet cameras, together with Czech cameras and Arriflexes, are used for newsreels and documentaries. During my visit an American-made camera boom was parked in the middle of the sound stage floor. I was shown a background projector that had been imported from the U.S. just before the embargo came into force. "We use it," my studio guide told me, "but we're not one hundred percent sure of its capabilities. Our technicians are still working at it." In the course of my tour I saw a number of other pieces of American equipment, notably a Macallister crab dolly, an Oxberry optical printer and an Oxberry animation camera.

The U.S. trade embargo is doubtless a main cause of the diversity—or perhaps confusion—to be found in the lighting and electrical equipment, which included imports from Canada, Britain, East Germany, the Soviet Union, and even Communist China.

Black-and-white feature films and documentaries are shot on Orwo, the East German version of Agfa. Gevapan and Ilford are used for newsreels. All black-and-white film is processed in the Cubanacán labs, mainly with American and East German equipment. As for color, I asked Yelín what kind of film stock had been used for *Un Día en el Solar.* "Eastmancolor," he replied. "Where did you get it?" "Ah," he said, smiling, "that's a trade secret!" This particular movie was processed in Spain; usually, said Yelín, color film is processed in Prague. Orwo color film is used in addition to the Eastmancolor of mysterious provenance.

Actually, the problem of obtaining American equipment and materials—via a third country—is not particularly difficult. Spare parts for the Mitchells and so on are no doubt obtainable through the same channels. Nevertheless, the extra time and effort involved in maintaining and repairing American equipment must have some braking effect on ICAIC's production schedules.

Underlying everything is the economic problem. Virtually all materials used in Cuban film production have to be imported. Because of its prestige value, film production is undoubtedly sheltered from economic squeezes: film imports may be maintained while food imports are cut. But indirect long-term pressures could in the long run reshape ICAIC's policies.

At present, for example, ICAIC appears to recognize the fact that building up a new Cuban cinema is a necessarily gradual process. Referring to the eight new directors who made their first features in 1964, Yelín told me: "Although their films were not extraordinary, I think it was a very good thing because now they are making their second films—and that is the only way to build a national industry." But will ICAIC be able to maintain such a philosophical attitude? In recent months, Cuba's economic situation has worsened: Communist China backed out of its trade agreement, and this year's sugar harvest is expected to fall well below last year's. If such economic troubles persist, ICAIC might close its doors to any more new directors, and the established directors might be urged to produce either festival winners or films more fervently glorifying the revolution.

Another, less speculative effect of Cuba's economic problems is the lack of facilities for movie making outside ICAIC—among amateurs, university groups, and so on. No 8mm or 16mm equipment or film is being imported, and there are no lab services for amateurs. Whereas many of the present generation of movie-makers gained experience outside the industry, there is no opportunity for a future generation to be formed in the same way.

It is seven years since ICAIC was established.

During that time Cuba has produced several respectable films, but none that has been widely acclaimed without reservations or without political sympathy. Of course, Cuba is a small country; but Sweden, with about the same population, has in the same period produced a handful of outstanding films without the spur of a revolution. It may be argued that a revolution spurs ardor before quality: the Soviet Union, for example, did not produce any really outstanding films in the first seven years after *its* revolution. But Castro's revolution was hardly as far-reaching as Lenin's. Its only major positive achievement was to throw off America's political and economic domination of Cuba. Many Cubans I talked with expressed pride in this, and in the fact that Cuba has survived in the teeth of American hostility. But can pride in a single achievement continue to hold its own against economic hardship and arbitrary dictatorship?

The first film ever made in Cuba, in 1896, was a brief documentary on the Havana fire department, entitled *Extinction of a Fire*. The next year or two may show whether this could also be an apt title for the Cuban cinema under Castro.

ERNEST CALLENBACH

The State of 8

A critical journal is not normally much concerned with technological developments. But sometimes innovations in machinery can affect the basic conventions of the art. We have seen this happen in the postwar years in two areas: the new portable cameras and recorders made the whole *cinéma-vérité* approach possible, and the widescreen processes have brought about a slower, cooler, more "synthetic" style of photography and editing. Recent developments in 8mm equipment are likely to make far-reaching changes in other conventions: those governing what kind of experience we take film-viewing to be, and hence what kind of works ought to be made for it.

Even with the spread of 16mm film usage into many areas of life (notably classrooms and industrial or military training programs) film-viewing has remained a mass-audience, one-time experience; and the physical object we call "a film" has been something routed around, by distributors or libraries, from theater to theater, school to school. The advent of 8mm may well make a film something to be confronted *by individuals*, just as a book or record is. It is worth remembering that music, too, was once an audience experience; it was the radio and the phonograph that made it something we now chiefly experience at home. In this, of course, 8mm has certain points of contact with television, which is also "consumed" at home. But just as people find it desirable to have their own libraries of records, to avoid depending on radio station tastes for their enjoyment of music, so we are likely to find people building up collections of 8mm films.

Indeed this process is already quite far along. Both 16mm and 8mm are playing a role in the lively expansion of film collecting. Such collecting has at present some of the tone of stamp- or butterfly-collecting; collectors barter among themselves, rare treasures are offered in catalogues, secret holdings are gloated over. Heretofore this kind of collector mentality has been gratifiable on any large scale only by persons who were wealthy or who managed to parlay their holdings into appointments as heads of archives. Now when a print of *Birth of a Nation* can be bought for $64.98, and *Potemkin* for $29.95, and *The Gold Rush* for $49.95, the situation is clearly changing. A much larger number of people can indulge the desire to own films; and that they are in fact doing so can be ascertained from the surprisingly rich catalogues of the firms which have become established in the field.

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In this new world of the 8mm print, the newcomer must walk warily—for it is a wilderness of new prints, used prints, excerpts, "condensations," magnetic tracks, optical tracks. Once oriented, however, the connoisseur will find himself hard put to choose among cherished films. Keaton's *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* can be got for $39.95, and his *Cops* for $10.00. William S. Hart's *Hell's Hinges* is $29.95. You can pick up standard classics such as Stroheim's *Foolish Wives* for $50.00, Lang's *Metropolis* for $45.00, *Ten Days That Shook the World* for $40.00. (16mm prints for these three cost $165.00.) D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* is $74.98; *Broken Blossoms, America,* and *Way Down East* are also available. The early and crucial *Battle at Elderbush Gulch,* prime item for film history, is $11.98, and a Griffith film called *The Battle* which anticipates the war scenes of *Birth of a Nation,* is $5.98. Some 25 early Chaplins are available: *The Cure, Behind the Screen, The Floorwalker* are $9.98; *The Fireman,* which is a little longer, is $11.98, as is the classic *The Pawnshop.* (Prices in the 8mm game sound like grocery prices—they go by the "reel," which may mean various things, or by the foot; shipping weights are specified, since buyers pay the mailing costs; there are sales with special bargain offers.) New 8mm prints can be found for a considerable number of silent film-makers: Laurel & Hardy, Mack Sennett, Bronco Billy Anderson, Hal Roach, Douglas Fairbanks, and so on. And there is a brisk traffic in used prints: everything from Pearl White serials to historical items like *On a Good Old Five Cent Trolley Ride.*

To date this kind of development has been chiefly in silent films, both because copyright problems seem to be slight and because magnetic sound-striping has been the only way to reproduce sound on 8mm prints. This too is now changing: the Viewlex projector, which is now on the market, and the Toei projector, which will be released shortly, both combine magnetic and optical-sound systems. Prints with optical sound will be considerably cheaper to produce than those with magnetic; and even Kodak, which was banking on its silent Super 8 to make its fortunes for a while, has hired engineer J. M. Maurer (who developed the optical-sound machinery for 8mm) to devise an optical-sound system for Super 8.

Unquestionably, the development of an 8mm print-sales system could not come about overnight, any more than the LP record system did. Nonetheless, it raises fascinating prospects, especially for the short film, whose fate is so crucial to the health of the film art generally. If a substantial market exists for classic films, it seems not unreasonable that a market could be found for contemporary independent films, especially those which are being made by "professional amateurs" on budgets of $500-$1,000. At present, such films develop virtually no net income through rentals, and little through print sales to film libraries. They are, like many creative activities, fundamentally avocational; when their makers derive income from them, it is usually through foundation grants or prizes. But

8MM PRINT SOURCES

As of May, 1936, the following are evidently the leading dealers in 8mm prints. All these firms make clear in their promotion that they sell prints *for private use only*; public showing of such prints, we understand, would infringe rights held by distributors, and can bring on costly legal action.

Blackhawk Films, Davenport, Iowa 52805, publishes an occasional tabloid-size catalogue of offerings, which are very extensive.

Entertainment Films Company, 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019, issues mimeographed releases describing their films.

John Griggs, 139 Maple Street, Englewood, New Jersey, is a private collector with extensive holdings who offers copies of his films for sale.

A publication, the *8mm Collector,* is issued by Samuel K. Rubin at 734 Philadelphia Street, Indiana, Pa., 15701, and contains various information about items available.

if 8mm print sales, through such organizations as the Film-Makers Cooperative, could be developed on some businesslike basis, these film-makers might be put into a relatively direct economic contact with their audiences. The total number of prints sold would not have to be terribly large. If 100 prints of Bruce Baillie's *Tung* could be sold, with a royalty of $5 on each one, that lovely and intriguing film would have earned back its costs.

However, the difficulties in achieving even this rate of sale, even for quite successful films, are many. In any distribution enterprise, a certain scale is essential for practical economy; and it is likely that organizations already experienced in direct-mail sales will actually open up this new field—record clubs, book clubs, publishers, or the like.

It is important, in thinking about 8mm, not to confuse film-making with distribution or collecting. As Ralph Sargent makes clear in the following article, there are substantial difficulties in the way of professional flexibility in 8mm production. Some of these will break down as the amateur market becomes more sophisticated: the double-system 8mm projector which is a key necessity for simple 8mm sound editing is now produced by one European firm, Siemens. It seems certain, however, that film-makers will always show a strong preference for the bigger gauges. Just as 35mm men regard 16mm as "substandard" and say they can't bear to handle it, 16mm men think of 8mm as a toy. And, although professional is as professional does (and TV has utterly abandoned 35mm, standardizing on 16 instead) we must recognize that the 35mm image *is* immensely finer than 16, and 16 considerably finer than 8. For any film that is to be projected, at any time in its conceivable life, in a size greater than about 4x5 feet, 35 is best. But there are many factors, most of them obviously economic, which push film-makers toward 16mm work, and it is likely that film production of an independent sort will continue largely on this gauge, which permits both reduction to 8mm and, if the original is shot with top-grade lenses and cameras, enlargement to 35mm.

There is much loose talk about video-tape recording displacing film, and it is also important to understand the bearings of this kind of development, which will parallel that of 8mm for some time. Electronic recording techniques have a number of important advantages over film—most of all, the ability of the electronic camera to see in dim light almost as well as the human eye. A shot recorded on video tape may be played back immediately, during production, to check that it is OK. (This also keeps down the costs of tape supplies.) The costs and physical sizes of cameras and video-tape recorders have been steadily dropping. We are still, however, a substantial distance from the point where video will be more or less interchangeable with film, either from a quality or cost or convenience standpoint. Although there is some work going on in closed-circuit video recording with a considerably higher fidelity (more lines, chiefly) than we are accustomed to on TV, most research is based on accepting the TV standards, which are poorer than 8mm in definition. High-fidelity electronic cameras are heavier than 16mm optical cameras, and even when made "portable" carry a bulky back-pack of electronic gear with them; the video-tape recording machines require two men to carry them. Costs are now somewhere around $20,000 for a TV-standard video tape "filming" rig, which is three or four times as much as a far less clumsy optical rig capable of sensationally better quality. Editing difficulties on video tape (which is, originally, "single-system" so that the sound must be dubbed off for editing) are also still troublesome.

It is also said, with a gleeful technological gleam in the eye, that central computer banks could retain films stored on electronic tape, on call to individuals; then dialing a number on your TV could bring in the film of your choice, which you would not have to own at all. What little experience we have had with cable pay-TV systems so far indicates clearly the great practical difficulties in the way of such a plan: monthly charges for lines are one factor whose costs cannot be much diminished, even if the time-cycling problem for popular items could be

solved. However, the costs to the consumer (even of a storage bank capable of handling the entire contents of the present 16mm distributors' catalogues, plus as many films as are currently in theatrical distribution) might in time prove to be acceptably low, especially if the films were offered as part of a general cable pay-TV program. The chief limit to any such system is the cost of the machinery necessary to select and "play" any given tape. Since the number of playback machines might, under conditions of broad audience taste variety, approach the number of items stored, these costs would be quite high per customer, even with ingenious time-sharing devices, unless the total audience was very large indeed.

However, in the eyes of some of the visionaries of pay-TV, the audiences *would* be very large; and it may indeed come to pass that some form of electronic "distribution" will ultimately handle many films. Even so, by the nature of mass society, the films chosen for such distribution will be the safe films, the films which do not contain anything too startling or too new. It will remain for 8mm to provide the technology for the underground cinema of the future.

RALPH SARGENT

8mm at UCLA

The Motion Picture Division of the Theater Arts Department at UCLA generally works in 16mm. However, with the large enrollment of students it is not possible to equip every student with a 16mm camera. It is for this reason that 8mm is being used to introduce students to film-making. In effect, 8mm, because of its small cameras (requiring a minimum of accessories) and the low cost of film stock, is used extensively as the "sketch pad" of the beginning film student.

Not only have we attempted to provide the students with a basic picture-recording device, we have also attempted to duplicate the sound-recording potential and editing flexibility of the larger and more expensive gauges. At UCLA it is possible to make an 8mm double-system, lip-sync, mixed, sound motion picture—and do it at a fraction of the cost of 16mm.

Of the many different types of film stock available, we find that the students tend to divide about evenly in their use of color and black-and-white. Though Kodak only retails 8mm color film, it does make many of its 16mm black-and-white films with 8mm high-speed perforations on special order. A number of companies, scattered throughout the United States, offer these films respooled for 8mm camera use. Dupont does likewise. Perutz black-and-white film is generally available directly from photo stores.

As far as processing is concerned, our location in Los Angeles is ideal, since many of the smaller laboratories are equipped to handle 8mm black-and-white, and offer rapid service. Generally color shooting is done on Kodachrome II and the processing is handled by Eastman in Hollywood. It is possible for our students to get an idea on one day, shoot it, and have the film back on the following day.

The University stocks five different types of 8mm cameras for student use. They are: Sekonic Micro-Eye F, Jelco Zoom 8, Kodak Automatic 8, Bell & Howell Type 134, and Fairchild Sound 8. The Sekonic is the most popular with the students primarily because of its reflex viewfinder, fully automatic exposure controls (which may be locked out), single-frame device, and focussing zoom lens. The Jelco ranks second because of its zoom lens. The Kodak and Bell & Howell cameras are only occasionally used since they lack interchangeable lenses and are quite inflexible compared to the Sekonic and Jelco. The Fairchild is used for single- and double-system sound work. It has been modified by the addition of a governor-controlled motor and sync generator for use with

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any of the well-known sync tape recorders (Nagra, Perfectone, Rangertone, etc.) but still retains its single-system recording capability. Whenever possible, tripods are checked out with the cameras as most students soon learn the value of steady camera support.

Silent editing is accomplished with the use of conventional 8mm viewers. We also have two 8mm Moviolas with 16mm sound heads. In the preparation of an 8mm sound film the original tapes are transferred to 16mm magnetic film and edited in sync with the 8mm picture by the use of specially constructed synchronizers having one 8mm sprocket and three 16mm sprockets. (Magnetic film with 8mm perforations can only be obtained on a costly special-order basis at present.)

SOURCES OF 8MM FILM STOCK

Most 8mm film stock sold in the United States is of either Kodak or Dupont manufacture, although it reaches the customer in a variety of packages, some of which include processing in their price. Dupont's types 936 (negative), 930, and 931 (reversal) are commonly available; Kodak offers Tri-X and Plus-X (both reversal). Perutz reversal films, made in Germany, include U-15, U-21, and U-27.

RETAIL SALES:

Cinecraft
8764 Beverly Blvd.
Los Angeles 48, California

Dupont Photo Products
7051 Santa Monica Blvd.
Hollywood, California

Eastman Kodak
6677 Santa Monica Blvd.
Hollywood, California
(Eastman Kodak will sell 100-ft. daylight loads of 8mm perf. film on special order—10-roll minimum. Tri-X and Plus-X are available.)

Freestyle Sales Co.
1427 N. Western Ave.
Hollywood 27, California

Perutz Films
Burleigh Brooks, Inc.
6715 Melrose Ave.
Hollywood, California

Superior Bulk Film Co.
450 N. Wells St.
Chicago, Illinois, 60610

Western Cine
1138 N. LaBrea
Hollywood, California

8MM PROCESSING LABORATORIES

(Most large 16mm laboratories will process and split 8mm.)

Acme Film Lab
1161 N. Highland
Hollywood 38, California

Cinecraft
8764 Beverly Blvd.
Los Angeles 48, California

George W. Colburn Laboratory
164 North Wacker Drive
Chicago 6, Ill.

General Film Laboratory
1546 N. Argyle
Hollywood 28, California

Huemark Films
49 West 45th Street
New York, N. Y.
(This firm now does 8-mm-to-8mm printing, and will shortly undertake work on Super 8 and Format M; they will also undertake A&B roll printing from original 8mm footage. A new firm, so quality performance is not yet established.)

Photokem Industries
1321 Cahuenga Blvd.
West Hollywood 28, Calif.

Rainbow Film Labs
(processes Perutz film)
P. O. Box 113
San Gabriel, California

Though we do not have an 8/16mm preview Moviola we do have adequate projection facilities to run three 16mm tracks in interlock with the 8mm picture for mixing. In splicing the film, chemical hot splices are the normal splices. There is a certain amount of work done with tape splices, but with the "shoe-lace" character of 8mm film, tape splicing is more time-consuming and the splices show a tendency to jump in the projectors.

In projection equipment we have several standard machines, and one Kodak Sound 8. The Sound 8 is interesting in that it has been modified for interlock (with the 16mm tracks) by the addition of a standard Magnasync interlock motor. For large screen double- and single-system projection we have an additional modification for the Sound 8: a 50-ampere Brenkart arc lamp is substituted for the 500-watt incandescent lamp. This allows brilliant pictures, seven feet high, at a fifty foot throw. (In this application, normal gate cooling must be reinforced by external centrifugal blowers and refrigeration to insure the safe passage of the film through the machine.)

In most cases the 8mm films produced by students are screened and returned to the students. In a few cases, however, the films are of sufficient interest to show to a larger audience than within the film school. For this reason we print our best 8mm films on 16mm for general exhibition at our semi-annual public screenings. This work is handled for us by Color Reproduction Company in Hollywood and the quality has been uniformly excellent. We have never dealt in 8mm-to-8mm printing and none of our films originally photographed in any gauge is released in 8mm.

Recently we have been discussing converting to Super 8 as our standard "sketch" gauge. However, this presents certain specific problems which have not yet been solved by the manufacturers:

(1) The only film available is Kodachrome II. But our students make close to 50% of their films in black-and-white—and when questioned on their choice fervently support black-and-white as being best for whatever they did.

(2) Not until the introduction of the Beaulieu Super 8 camera did there exist a camera which really provided the flexibility and quality needed. The Beaulieu's high price, however, severely restricts the number of cameras that we may be able to make available to the students.

(3) Blow-up and print services are not yet available for Super 8 and this would make it impossible for us to exhibit our films publicly.

(4) The Moviolas we presently own for 8mm cannot be adapted to handle Super 8 and would have to be supplemented by new machines especially designed for this application. Once again we are hampered by budget.

In the average semester we make close to two hundred 8mm films of various lengths. Despite the effort that we have made to bring 8mm to the same flexibility as that of the larger gauges, students still insist upon using the medium as a "throw away" and perhaps rightly so. Our basic aim is to teach film-making. If 8mm, through its low cost, ready availability, and lack of mechanical impediments, contributes to a student's ability to test his ideas and visually learn from his mistakes, then its use, in any form, is justified.

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Resnais' "Night and Fog": The Jewess in the Lobby

"I am a rose of Sharon,
A lily of the valleys.
A shade she read by,
Gold at Fort Knox,
A lens, shattered under ear pieces,
I am a stain on a hook,
An inhalation never exhaled,
A scar on the ceiling of the chamber."

Spring, and undersod
The release of bones from frost.
April rains soak.
June, dry bones settle.

Sharp barbed wire encloses green grass
And repetitious dandelions.

Tourists focus their navels,
Click and hiss:
The corded lifeless corpses, the bodies at Belsen,
The redundant dead.
Show, show, show in Kokomo.
"But frankly, it was something of a disappointment.
Several . . . the same . . .
And we went on
To the Parthenon."

Under a gold-plated watch-band,
The code etched.
And do the others, having
Heiled it once, wear the swastika forever?

—DAVID MADDEN

Film Reviews

THE MARRIED WOMAN

(La Femme Mariée) Director: Jean-Luc Godard. Photography: Raoul Coutard. Script: Godard.

The essence of Jean-Luc Godard's *La Femme Mariée* is the transmutation of the dramatic into the graphic. The comings and goings of the characters, and the development of the story, are presented in the matter-of-fact way which is characteristic of Godard, and whose episodic nature reached its height in his film *Vivre Sa Vie*. The graphic elements in Godard's films are by no means new, they can be found in all of his work. What is new is the consistent movement into the graphic from the dramatic which is used as the basis of expression in this film, and which was only found in kernels in his other works. The dramatic or story line of the film is Charlotte's odyssey in search of an answer to her question of whether she should stay with her husband or her lover. Two of the film's title cards read successively: IN BLACK, AND WHITE, and it is between two contrasting poles that Charlotte moves, first searching at one, and then along a line to the other. The points on this line occur as encounters, which are strung together on the thread of Charlotte's movements over a period of two days. These movements are presented in Godard's almost throwaway style, and simply constitute the links between the important encounters. It is by means of these that Godard is able to move from one key to the next. By tracing, in this way, a complete line of Charlotte's activities during this period of time, Godard allows himself to be able to stop at certain points of importance, and to raise these, by use of graphic means, to a higher pitch than the line itself. These points of absolute ideas and emotions, presented as black or white, are not value judgments as to the good of one or the evil of another. They are of relief, or contrast, not of morality. Godard is a moralist because of his insistence upon carrying the eventualities of any choice to their furthest point. He is not, though, a traditional moralist because he does not choose beforehand which given choice is good. For Charlotte, as for all of Godard's women, choices involve the decision to follow one set of absolutes, or another. In this way Charlotte seems at times quite arbitrary, especially in her relations with Pierre and Robert.

Between the poles that are suggested by Pierre and Robert, Charlotte encounters many different ideas which preoccupy the minds of the characters in the film. There is a one-to-one correspondence between the minor characters and their dominant ideas, which constitutes their definition within the film. This can be said, also, of the other two major characters, but they take on more depth because of the nature of Charlotte's involvement with them. These ideas are representations which are presented to us in the seven interviews, using sound-on-film techniques, which Charlotte has throughout the film with the other characters, and in one instance, with herself. The technique is of the television newsreel interview. The character answering Charlotte is shot in Big Close-Up, and Charlotte's questions are heard from off-screen. Although we might cut back to Charlotte during the answer, for a more traditional reaction-shot, we never hear her speak and see her at the same time. The first four of these occur without Charlotte as an active interviewer. After dinner at home with Roger Leenhardt, there is a lull in the general conversation about their apartment, and the screen fades out. The screen fades in again on a close-up of Pierre, and he begins to tell a story about a group of Frenchmen who were prisoners of Hitler, and who hold a reunion not realizing that their once meager and starving selves had now become fat and prosperous. It is memory which bothers Pierre the most, and this ties in with his inability to forgive Charlotte completely for the affair which he believes ended some time ago. For Charlotte, the present holds the most fascination. There is a fade-out after Pierre's section, and a fade-in on a title card numbered 2 with "The Present" written across it. This happens again for Leen-

hardt's speech on reason, and for Pierre and Charlotte's child Nicholas's speech entitled "Pour le faire," and consisting of a list of steps, recipe-like, for creating a work of art. In Nicholas's case an opening door presents him to us, and with this the speech races from his lips at a mile-a-minute.

These titled and numbered interviews form the basis of the film's divisions. But whereas in *Vivre Sa Vie* the titles were of a journalistic nature, factually stating the events to follow, the titles of *La Femme Mariée* divide the film on the basis of the ideas expressed by the characters. The three subsequent interviews are direct confrontations by Charlotte of three of the characters in the film: the doctor, who tells her she is pregnant, and gives slow thoughtful answers to her questions on sexual moralities and science's effect on them; her maid who talks on the physical aspects of love (she has the strange quality of a cardboard cut-out brought to life; she is called Mme. Celine, and speaks, as her own response to Charlotte's question, lines lifted by Godard from Louis-Ferdinand Celine's *Mort à Credit*); and Robert who discusses acting and reality. During these the tension of the film relaxes for a time, and there are some moments for reflection. But, after them, we are thrown more forcefully than ever into the fabric of the film, because the frustration mounts. After the four speeches at dinner, there is a terrible fight between Pierre and Charlotte which Godard builds by placing his camera outside of two rooms of the apartment, and by panning slightly from right to left, or left to right, he can follow Pierre and Charlotte as he chases her in and out of the rooms. This slight movement of the camera as it covers the whole scene without moving closer emphasizes the irritation of this fight, its complete uselessness. Which is only relieved by the entrance of Beethoven's music before the second love scene, as will be seen later. Also, after Charlotte leaves the doctor's office, her last words to him are, "I am afraid"; we see her, in long shot, among a group of people who are crossing a street from the corner opposite the one on which the camera stands. As the crowd begins to move forward, toward the camera, Charlotte runs out of it, and, all of sudden, falls, sprawling in the middle of the street. She picks herself up, and continues on. But, this sudden fall is so startling one wonders whether Godard himself planned it, or it was a fortuitous accident. After Robert's answers to Charlotte's questions on art and reality we have the last scene of the film, and the third love scene. It seems that Charlotte has thoroughly "grilled" Robert, and that he has emptied himself of all the ideas which preoccupy him. Thus the final love scene occurs in a greater void than the other two. A space and time even more rarefied, exhausted of rhetoric than the two before it were, more concentrated emotionally in its anticipation of Robert's departure. And because of this it has the seeds of Charlotte's final throwing-up of the whole situation.

The directness of these interviews corresponds to the two main graphic devices with which it is a partner. The first is the use of titles and the photographing of contemporary images found in magazines, newspapers, posters, photographs, and billboards. The second is the use of camera devices, such as negative, and the patterns abstracted from the three love sequences. For Godard, any printing is grist for the mill. Sometimes he breaks up signs which exist in the environment of his characters, such as the camera panning across the sign at Orly Airport: PASSAGE CINEMA, breaking PASSAGE into PAS SAGE, "misbehaving": a reflection on the secret meeting of Robert and Charlotte. And, instead of creating a dramatic scene showing the perilous situation, with all the dramatic fakery and rhetoric, the musical commentary, and the intense acting, it is presented simply. This sequence is like a schematic diagram, the plotting out of Robert and Charlotte's movements as on a graph, with specific points of this graph defined by signs telling directly the meaning of each point. An electric sign, DANGER, earlier in the film found as a warning to motorists inside the darkened confines of a tunnel through which Charlotte passes, is transformed into the angel of its four middle letters: ANGE. The audacity of this way of showing how two contrary states exist one within the other is equiv-

alent to the statement that PAS SAGE too will pass.

This technique is not limited to words and phrases found naturally, but includes those which Godard himself creates for the film. PRENEZ PARTI occurs several times in the context of Charlotte's movements. Most usually it occurs as an abrupt interruption of an activity, after which we pick up the action again. The letters are printed in bold, large type, filling the face of the card, and the screen. It often appears accompanied by a violent passage in one of the Beethoven string quartets which are used throughout the film. The name EVE, found in the word RÊVES, "dreams," is like DANGER, creating a symmetry in that EVE is exactly composed of all the letters between the first and last letter of the word. Eve too is an absolute, the first woman, and like *The* Married Woman. (The French censors got the title changed to *Une Femme Mariée*, though this is contrary to the whole method of the film.) Eve is also a figure in mythology, and corresponds to Charlotte's cloudy, dream-like vision of an ideal, an absolute to follow. Godard has always been concerned with mythopoeic, transcendent values in man, but always measured against his actual being. And the tragedy in his films is the constant failure of his characters to find, and measure up to, the ideals which they seek. Because of his sternness and his uncompromising position he often seems a misanthrope.

In *Contempt*, Godard's most strictly dramatic story film, the themes are developed through a direct use of the comparison of dramatic situations and characters with those in the Odyssey. The use of the sequences from Lang's Odyssey, and Camille's letter to Paul at the end, are two examples of the use of graphic devices in this film. Here, the dramatic presentations of "static essentials," especially in reference to the different interpretations of the Odyssey which come up in the film, are forerunners to the "static essentials" (the phrase is Pavese's) which are presented even more directly, especially in graphic form, in *La Femme Mariée*.

It is in the café sequence, when Charlotte overhears the conversation between the two girls, that the images, graphic and dramatic, and the sound track, dialogue, effects, and music, are intertwined with the most complexity. The girls' conversation is about the impending loss of virginity by the girl on frame right. Quite simply, she represents ignorance, and her friend represents knowledge. This situation is a microcosm of Godard's approach to the whole film. As we overhear the conversation and learn its exact content, as we are presented with an Exposition, the situation is presented normally. Charlotte has entered the café and taken a seat at a table behind the girls. One of them is reading a copy of *Elle* which Charlotte asks if she can borrow. Offscreen we hear the girl reading a horoscope which perfectly applies to Charlotte's dilemma. As the conversation continues, however, the graphic elements gradually take over the role of communicating the situation. In the magazine Charlotte is reading in the background, we see printed: WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW. This is followed by: SHE KNOWS IT, and a shot of the girl on frame left. Next: SHE DOES NOT KNOW IT, and a shot of the girl on frame right. As the former begins to tell the latter what will happen when she sleeps with her boy friend for the first time, the noise level in the café rises, and we have difficulty understanding the dialogue. Here Godard uses titles superimposed in the center of the frame, just as he did in the love scene at the end of *Vivre Sa Vie*. In that film he uses superimposed titles of the dialogue in order to heighten the theatricality of the scene. He printed all the dialogue in place of hearing it on the sound track. In this film the dialogue is not printed exactly as it is spoken, and we can still hear enough of the lines to compare them to the printed titles. It is the important points, ideas, and phrases which are printed in the center of the frame, an outline of the conversation, not a reproduction of it. In this abstraction from the dramatic situation we are shown the mechanics of the device, as well as the device itself. In this way we follow Godard's method of movement from the dramatic situation to the graphic representation of it. The bones of the method are laid bare by this

very schematic presentation. This idea of the work itself evincing the process of its creation as an integral part of its form was born with the Action Painters, and is manifest in many fields of art. It is the illustration of the artist's confrontation of the material reality which he molds. It evokes a feeling of honesty in the texture and rawness of the materials which are not glossed over to hide their essential nature, simply to create a slick, and therefore lying, image. The constant references to film in Godard's works, the self-consciousness of each work, are there to keep the perspective that the work is subordinate to the creator.

We move completely into the graphic realm with the second part of this sequence. The magazine Charlotte is reading is full of stylized drawings which advertise women's undergarments, and photographs of the mid-sections of men showing form-fitting clothing. A ballet of these images is presented to us, patterned by the movements and compositions of Godard's camera. The sound track is a rock song entitled "Sad Movies Make Me Cry." Comparison with Pop Art here is perfectly valid, for much of Pop involves simplicity of pattern, and the use of contemporary, stylized images. In other words, for Godard, this sequence is handled in exactly the same way in which one would handle a standard dramatic sequence cut into a film—a sequence involving the real world of people and their environment. This bringing of the graphic or imagistic world to the same level as the real world is clinched by the final shot in this sequence. It is a still frame of the drawing of a woman, in the same style as many we have seen in the sequence. But all of a sudden we notice Charlotte's head enter at the bottom of frame right and move along the frame line. It is a billboard, and its huge existence as an object moves us from the more abstract drawings in the magazine, back to Charlotte's movements in the more traditional pre-Godard world of things and people. But, for Godard's woman who is alive today, it is the image-as-object she must contend with, just as she does with other objects and people in her world.

At three points in the film Godard uses photographs of personalities to define a sequence. The photographed drawing of Molière, above Robert's bed, is the impetus for a discussion of the morality of theater, and drama in general. To Molière, as we learn through the dialogue between Robert and Charlotte, as to Godard, the emotions and drives of the human being are purified by their ordered and heightened presentation in art. Of course, this is exactly what Godard is doing in this self-same film, and is another instance of the work commenting on itself. This is echoed in the images of Dietrich and Beethoven which appear after Charlotte's fight with Pierre over the records. Dietrich, who after sixty seems to be developing her charms even beyond her beauty, is the culmination of so many of the traits which make one say, "Now that's a (the) woman!"—willful, insistent, impetuous, and all-understanding. For Pierre, Charlotte's insistence on playing the records seems irrational in the face of his not wanting to ruin the records which are not his. All the album covers are different images of the female form: some exotic, some simple nude poses. They are like the ads in the magazine, and the billboard. Charlotte's insistence on playing the records is grounded in the necessity of her coming to terms with these images which stand as definitions of her. The obvious reaction of desire in the male response to photographs of this kind views these women as objects to be possessed. But, the female response is much different. It is Charlotte measuring herself against an image of her, in the sense that she is *The* and not *A* Married Woman. At the same time that the record player is the center of the argument, it becomes the instrument for order. The sequence of the fight comes to an end and we fade in on a full-shot of the open record player with a Beethoven string quartet playing. This is a transition shot between the fight and the second love scene. Beethoven is art, the ordering of the confused and irritating reality around Charlotte and within her. Here, there is a certain fusion between the purpose of art, and its effects, and the purpose of love which is shown in the following scene. It is the transcendent and unifying power of both.

Hitchcock, with a cone of light radiating from one eye, introduces the cat-and-mouse game which Charlotte and Robert play at Orly Airport. Throughout the film Charlotte is dodging and avoiding pursuers whom neither we nor she can see. This frenetic movement is, as was said before, the thread which is now and again interrupted by heightening elements. Its nervous energy is reminiscent of *Breathless*. But, unlike *Breathless* where the hand-held camera and jump cutting gave such a sense of immediacy to the action, the sections of movement are shorter and more concentrated with a certain detachment which emphasizes the immutability of Charlotte's state of mind at any particular instant in which she is presented to us.

In two instances Godard uses camera tricks. In the first Charlotte and Nicholas are walking down a road toward Pierre's landing plane. As they move quickly from right to left the camera is tilted on its side so we become aware of two lines moving to intersect each other. The plane appears to be moving down, nose first, as it taxis in, and Charlotte and Nicholas to be moving head first across the frame. Here the tilt carries us from the dramatic idea of the encounter between Charlotte, who has just left Robert, and Pierre, returning after several days absence, to the graphic or patterned representation. This schematic device suspends the action of the film for a moment, making us aware of the frame. The tilt causes the elements of the picture to be hung precariously, emphasizing their relationship to one another. The dramatic insecurity of the situation is translated directly into a pictorial insecurity. This device "titles," so to speak, the whole of the following sequence where we meet Pierre for the first time. Godard's camera is very fluid here, establishing the relationships of the characters, especially of Pierre to Charlotte, by their constant movement in and out of frame of a moving camera, or of a very long take. Thus he emphasizes the coming together and moving apart of Charlotte and Pierre, based on Charlotte's preoccupation with her problem and Pierre's attempt to reaffirm their relationship. Although the split was in time and space, not in spirit, it is the reality of the photographable situation which is most important to Godard, and, as will be seen, is one of the main reasons why Charlotte leaves Robert at the end of the film. Thus, concepts finding their expression in words are photographed as a reality equal to the reality of Charlotte changing taxis in the middle of a busy Paris street: Godard has said that film is truth 24 times a second.

The use of negative in the pool sequence is again the transition from the dramatic to the graphic without the intrusion of an element from outside the action. Like the plane sequence the scene defines itself by the use of a device which is strictly a filmic, mechanical one, and which makes one aware of the very material of which the filmic image is created. Indeed, the sequence is one of Charlotte directing the photography of the elements of this scene. Girls at play are being photographed by a still photographer, and in contrast to Godard's precise coverage of other scenes in the film, this appears to be the work of an avid 8mm cameraman who is trying to capture the beauties of the feminine form as it frisks about in scant swim suits. Pattern in movement is emphasized by the use of negative. Here the female image is generalized by the practical impossibility of telling one individual from another, and the demand on the spectator to work to distinguish one form from another. Especially to separate a single body from the background, and confusion of the others, and, instead of taking its construction for granted, to visually reconstruct the way in which these forms go to make up the whole body. It is as if the viewer had never seen a female form before and was studying it upon encountering it for the first time. Charlotte is as much a part of these as anyone else there, and the last shot outside at the poolside, before we go into the dressing rooms, shows a close-up of her also in negative. Inside the dressing room the camera is back on the tripod. Still in negative we see some of the girls coming in from the pool. As Charlotte enters and separates herself from the group of girls around her at the door we cut back to positive. We continue to follow

her in positive until the still cameraman speaks to her. Before she replies we again see her in negative, but after she refuses we see her in positive again. In this way Godard shows us Charlotte's continuous loss and regain of her individuality, the various facets of which have plagued her throughout the film. Every definition by an image outside herself causes this loss, exposing for our view a facet, emotional or intellectual. The need for balance and harmony, to integrate her own being as her own, is what motivates her quest, and the three love scenes are the only points in the film where this occurs.

Rhetoric, even formal rhetoric, ends and gives way to unity in the three love scenes which occur at the beginning, middle, and end of the film. The act of love becomes a ritual celebrating life. And all value judgments such as sacred, profane, and adulterous give way to the celebration of this rite. Dialogue is gone; the lovers speak in unison, and the immoral is not a violation of conventional moralities, but any act which paralyzes the consummation of this love. Selection and emphasis also reach their highest point during these sequences. Godard's compositions are based on the fragmentation of the lovers' bodies to create patterns which are so powerful just because they do not deal with whole forms. Given the familiarity of the human form, perhaps the *most* familiar of all forms to us, Godard is able to fragment it, breaking it down to create new patterns because of the suggestibility inherent in not seeing the whole form. The concrete images in the frame are enclosed in the thought-images of the continuation and extension of the forms beyond, and around, the frame. This device, like the use of negative, forces the viewer's attention to the construction of the forms. By including fragments of both the lovers in the frame, of making a single patern from parts of both of them, the unifying and transcending power of the ritual is shown.

Each pattern is enclosed by a fade-in and a fade-out. The fade-out is long and as such emphasizes the preceding pattern, allowing the image to slip away and the pace to be kept at a slow rhythm. The fade-in is half as long, revealing in a quick motion the next pattern. The fade-in and fade-out are usually used at the beginning and end of a complete sequence, but here they show each pattern as a separate building block, a specific element in the ritual which must be attended to with precision and care.

Three times we see the lips of a character repeating "je t'aime" over and over again, without actually hearing the words. This, like the fade-in and fade-out, slows the pace, emphasizing both the activity of love-making and the visual patterning. By forcing the spectator to read the lips of the character (and it is a simple enough phrase for this) Godard draws him into being one with the speaker, as the viewer himself repeats the phrase over and over, in his own mind. Without sound the exaggeration of the "speaker" gives a feeling of theatricality to the scene, rather than one of irritation at being bombarded by the image and sound with no room for the free play of the viewer's imagination. In this way the viewer can think an interpretation to the line which would otherwise be supplied by an actor reading.

Near the end of the final love scene a voice breaks into the sound track announcing the imminent departure of Robert's plane for Marseille. When Charlotte is asked by Robert to cue him on his lines for *Berenice*, this is more than just a parallel between the parting scene in the play and the actual parting of Robert and Charlotte. Whereas Robert acts, giving expression to the text as he reads, Charlotte does not. She simply gives a flat reading of her lines, as an alternating response to Robert. She is letting the situation roll out before her. With his final statement that he must go, and Charlotte's "Then, it is finished," the film ends. The last shot is from above looking down on their arms, just as was the first shot of the film. As Robert says he must go he withdraws his arm leaving hers on the white sheet, as she speaks her last line she pulls her arm out of frame leaving a blank, white frame. The film ends, the affair ends, because there is no more reality to the situation after Robert leaves. There is nothing for Godard to photograph. Charlotte's indecision was grounded in Robert's presence as an alternative to her

husband. Her husband and her lover were the points, or poles, between which she encountered the emotions and ideas which structure the film. The material reality was the cause of her frustration. Her final acceptance of the end of the situation frees her from the hell which she has been experiencing.

But this is by no means either fatalism or a final answer to her question. It is only the elimination of the tension: the elimination of the immediate need to find her definition. Robert will return, and if she has not forgotten him, the problem may arise again. Other situations may, in the future, confront her with the need to take up the search again. Just as this film is called *Fragments of a Film Shot in 1964*, so is the total film only a fragment of life: a technique which could be called one of emotional and intellectual collage. Unlike works of drama in the past, which were based on characters in situations which changed their whole lives, this film is only the presentation of a momentary conflict or tension. This conflict gives birth to many kinds of emotions, "static essentials," which Godard orders so that we may understand them more clearly. It is a disturbance that for the time it exists consumes the total energies of Charlotte. All the more, because the film exists so much in and for the moment in its use of things contemporary, it is incisive. An instantaneous plunge into the fabric of the life of a character that lingers in the mind as a reality which is immutable, and constantly re-echoes there long after the film has been seen.—JOHN BRAGIN

OTHELLO

Director: Stuart Burge. (Director of National Theater production: John Dexter.) Producers: Anthony Havelock-Allen and John Braebourne. Photography: Geoffrey Unsworth. Music: Richard Hampton. Warners.

Since the production of the first sound version of Shakespeare (George Cukor's *Romeo and Juliet*—1932) about once every three years there has been a fresh attempt to deal with the enormously complex problem of presenting Elizabethan stage action and language on the screen. Generally, Laurence Olivier's three adaptations are considered the most successful, but his work in this area was checked by the unwillingness of backers to finance a projected version of *Macbeth*. Subsequently Olivier immersed himself in various theatrical projects, and since he has accepted the directorship of the National Theater the chances of his making another Shakespeare film are virtually nonexistent. But Olivier is still available to film audiences as an actor, and now his performance as Othello has been put on film for the convenience of those who are not able to see it on the London stage.

This *Othello*, directed by Stuart Burge, who has done some previous television work, differs from previous films of its kind by an almost total sacrifice of cinematic potential. Rather than a film, it is a film recording of a stage performance. Yet taken on these terms it has a great deal to offer. From the first shot, when the camera discovers Iago talking with Roderigo as they move along a stylized, theatrical Venetian arcade, the camera never seems unnecessarily imprisoned; the brisk rhythm of cutting and the variation of camera position produce the sustained visual pace we expect of the cinema. But there is no spectacular manipulation of the camera, nor any attempt to make filmic comments. Burge's camera is modest and objective, content to highlight the performance rather than dominate or shape it. At times Burge's framing of significant details is inspired (a self-satisfied Iago is revealed stroking his newly acquired belt of lieutenancy), although occasionally his emphases are rather banal (a close-up of Roderigo unsheathing his sword).

The most serious flaw in Burge's direction is that his camera appears to have severe myopia. The film contains a great many close shots, and too often a sense of the total arrangement of the action as it must have appeared on the stage is lost. The camera rarely moves back to place the actors in their context, and when it does the effect is striking enough to suggest that it should have spent more time there.

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But this is by no means either fatalism or a final answer to her question. It is only the elimination of the tension: the elimination of the immediate need to find her definition. Robert will return, and if she has not forgotten him, the problem may arise again. Other situations may, in the future, confront her with the need to take up the search again. Just as this film is called *Fragments of a Film Shot in 1964*, so is the total film only a fragment of life: a technique which could be called one of emotional and intellectual collage. Unlike works of drama in the past, which were based on characters in situations which changed their whole lives, this film is only the presentation of a momentary conflict or tension. This conflict gives birth to many kinds of emotions, "static essentials," which Godard orders so that we may understand them more clearly. It is a disturbance that for the time it exists consumes the total energies of Charlotte. All the more, because the film exists so much in and for the moment in its use of things contemporary, it is incisive. An instantaneous plunge into the fabric of the life of a character that lingers in the mind as a reality which is immutable, and constantly re-echoes there long after the film has been seen.—JOHN BRAGIN

OTHELLO

Director: Stuart Burge. (Director of National Theater production: John Dexter.) Producers: Anthony Havelock-Allen and John Braebourne. Photography: Geoffrey Unsworth. Music: Richard Hampton. Warners.

Since the production of the first sound version of Shakespeare (George Cukor's *Romeo and Juliet*—1932) about once every three years there has been a fresh attempt to deal with the enormously complex problem of presenting Elizabethan stage action and language on the screen. Generally, Laurence Olivier's three adaptations are considered the most successful, but his work in this area was checked by the unwillingness of backers to finance a projected version of *Macbeth*. Subsequently Olivier immersed himself in various theatrical projects, and since he has accepted the directorship of the National Theater the chances of his making another Shakespeare film are virtually nonexistent. But Olivier is still available to film audiences as an actor, and now his performance as Othello has been put on film for the convenience of those who are not able to see it on the London stage.

This *Othello*, directed by Stuart Burge, who has done some previous television work, differs from previous films of its kind by an almost total sacrifice of cinematic potential. Rather than a film, it is a film recording of a stage performance. Yet taken on these terms it has a great deal to offer. From the first shot, when the camera discovers Iago talking with Roderigo as they move along a stylized, theatrical Venetian arcade, the camera never seems unnecessarily imprisoned; the brisk rhythm of cutting and the variation of camera position produce the sustained visual pace we expect of the cinema. But there is no spectacular manipulation of the camera, nor any attempt to make filmic comments. Burge's camera is modest and objective, content to highlight the performance rather than dominate or shape it. At times Burge's framing of significant details is inspired (a self-satisfied Iago is revealed stroking his newly acquired belt of lieutenancy), although occasionally his emphases are rather banal (a close-up of Roderigo unsheathing his sword).

The most serious flaw in Burge's direction is that his camera appears to have severe myopia. The film contains a great many close shots, and too often a sense of the total arrangement of the action as it must have appeared on the stage is lost. The camera rarely moves back to place the actors in their context, and when it does the effect is striking enough to suggest that it should have spent more time there.

This extreme intimacy is suggestive of television technique, and, as a matter of fact, the producers are members of British Home Entertainments, the initiators of the new British pay-TV system which began functioning in January. In December, 1965, Havelock-Allen told the London *Observer* that *Othello* would first be shown in movie theaters in the U.S, then, after the closing of the National Theater production late in 1966, in British theaters. Their ultimate intention was to screen it on pay-TV, and it bears all the earmarks of having been tailored for TV. Proportionately, the intimacy is grotesquely misapplied to action intended to convey an illusion at a distance of fifty yards.

Olivier's performance in particular is marred by the closeness of the camera. His make-up is subtle enough for the stage, but on the screen the contrast between the grease paint and the areas around his mouth and eyes that could not be covered is too evident. His acting, pitched for the stage, often requires the camera to move back, as it does in his own films, for the proper effect to be achieved. It is impossible to deliver Othello's lines ("I'll tear her all to pieces"; "I will chop her into messes"; "O, blood, blood, blood") in quite the same way as a quip tossed over a cocktail, yet the camera hovers under Olivier's nose as if that were precisely what he was doing. Othello's first violent outburst is only one instance:

> . . . O, now, for ever
> Farewell the tranquil mind! Farewell content!
> Farewell the plumed troop, and the big wars
> That make ambition virtue! O, farewell!
> . . . . . .
> And, O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
> The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,
> Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone!

It is elegant rhetorical bombast, and, within the limits dictated by modern taste, the delivery should be on approximately the same scale as the words. Olivier wades in boldly, striking a pose on "pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war" calculated to dazzle a theatrical audience all the way to the gallery. The camera responds with a close-up. And so it goes. As a result, half of Olivier's performance is off-screen and the other half is magnified to the point of extravagance.

Even in its mangled condition, Sir Laurence's performance has an appalling impact. Othello is, in many respects, the most demanding role Shakespeare ever created. From the third act onward he runs through an extraordinary gamut of emotions, reeling dizzily back and forth from idealistic love ("Perdition catch my soul,/But I do love thee") to ferocious jealous hatred ("Damn her, lewd minx! O, damn her!"). He whips himself repeatedly into rages which mount to screaming, ranting hysteria. Up to a point, Othello is represented with psychological sophistication. His boastfulness and apparent self-esteem, implicit in his own language and explicitly confirmed by the reliable Amelia, may be taken as a symptom of a lurking sense of inferiority which requires only a slight nudge from Iago to hurl the Moor into a fit of jealousy bordering on madness. At the same time, Othel-

Sir Laurence Olivier as Othello.

lo is a tragic hero in the classic tradition, with virtues, faults, and passions superhuman in their scope and intensity.

Perhaps the first thing which should be said about Olivier's Othello is that it is confoundedly audacious. He plays the Moor as a blue-black velvet Negro with a hip-rolling swagger that lapses, with his descent to the bestial, into a slinking crouch. He rolls his eyes and laughs with his tongue pressed impudently against his lower lip. He speaks with a slight Calypso lilt, is given to a petulant pout. But what could slip so easily into racial parody becomes instead a sympathetic portrait of a man who has made himself indispensable to a society which denies him full membership. To the sophisticated Venetians he is a strange, exotic creature, regarded with a mixture of respect and the same curiosity that draws crowds to a carnival side-show. Placed in this unenviable position, he works overtime at the image which has earned him a rather backhanded approval in order to ingratiate himself and bolster up his lagging ego. During his senate speech, he is almost a caricature of deferential humility, and even then he cannot resist evoking some of the bizarre tale which made him a favorite diversion in Brabantio's household and which, to the old signor's dismay, won the favor of Desdemona.

Olivier's Othello is full of subtle strokes—the idealization and hypnotic sensuality which cling to his early scenes with Desdemona, the nervous titter of delight which creeps into his reunion with Desdemona in Cyprus, the quiet authority with which he ends the fight instigated by Iago. Olivier's voice, trained to a deeper pitch for this role, is an instrument of remarkable range, and his adopted accent often enriches the wild music of verse unsurpassed in Shakespeare.

Olivier executes the scenes of jealous rage with terrific, savage intensity. He has often been called a bravura actor, but this is bravura with a vengeance. Tragedy to Olivier is not only an intellectual and emotional experience, but necessarily a physical experience as well—a kind of visceral shock—and consequently his tragedy (of which to date there has been only a pale suggestion on the screen) is, as much as anything else, a tragedy of sheer, brute force. In *Othello,* he spares neither his audience nor himself. He writhes like a wounded snake, roars, whimpers, falls in a cataleptic fit, flips Iago to the floor by the throat like a rag doll, manhandles Desdemona, foams at the mouth. The tension between this reckless expenditure of energy and Olivier's tight technical control builds up a tremendous pressure. The muscles tense; the veins swell. At times his body seems about to explode. At the top of his performance he actually achieves the proper scale for Othello, a rare and difficult accomplishment. He is bigger than life.

Olivier is particularly fine in the last two scenes with Desdemona, picking his way through a bewildering sequence of emotions with stunning virtuosity. He moves from enraged accusation to rationalization to deep love to jealousy, and teeters frantically between the last two until, even as he strangles Desdemona, he kisses her compulsively on the lips. Realizing his mistake at last, he gathers up her body and wails "Oh Desdemona! Desdemona! dead!" Audiences are accustomed to painted passions. They have seen hundreds of actors simulate grief, but normally the smug sense of make-believe is retained. There is no fakery about this wail; it is disagreeably real. It is sustained, shattering, fearfully animal, pitifully human. No other Shakespeare film has come so close to a realization of classical tragedy, and *Othello* owes its comparative success largely to Sir Laurence's stupendous performance.

The supporting cast is universally excellent. Frank Finlay's subtle, homosexual, ruthlessly efficient Iago is particularly effective. He casts one fleeting glance over his shoulder that could justify his performance all by itself. For the briefest instant, the serpent peers out through his mask of amiable subservience. Maggie Smith is a graceful, auburn-haired Desdemona with a fine, full-throated voice, delicately combining firm self-assurance with a fragile innocence. It's enough to make posterity sorry for missing the rest of the production.

—CONSTANCE BROWN

NICHT VERSÖHNT

(Not Reconciled) By Daniele Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub. After the novel "Billard um Halb Zehn" by Heinrich Böll. Camera: Wendelin Sachtler, Gerhard Ries, Christian Schwarzwald and Jean-Marie Straub. Sound: Lutz Grübnau and Willi Hanspach.

Germany doesn't make many films that create stirs at international film festivals. Especially not since 1933. But *Nicht Versöhnt* caused more than a stir: it caused a storm at Germany's own festival, the "Berlinale," and it did so during a single, only half-official, small-scale screening in an auxiliary hall. Because it's a film that deals squarely with Germans in today's Germany, and it doesn't make any concessions.

At first viewing it appears to be a film made by a man who hates Germans. And the film makes clear why he appears to hate them. The fact that we can see the reasons so clearly, and are drawn by the film to emulate that hatred, may explain why the Germans—in turn—hate the film. Because the Germans are probably the only people today who are too close to what the film portrays to be able to understand it. Disdain is easier, and in Berlin the audience showed it voluminously.

And yet this is a German film, based on a German novel, by a German best-selling author: Heinrich Böll. *Billiards at Half Past Nine*, the novel, made only a mild stir when it was published, and wasn't translated. But the film was immediately acclaimed by critics everywhere—except in Germany. French critics and directors came to its support when the publisher of the novel tried to impound the print, claiming that its director-producer hadn't paid for the rights; but actually it was clear to everyone that they were simply aghast at the bad reception the film had in Berlin and wanted to make sure the rights would remain available for another film.

But it is most unlikely that a German could have made this film. The man who did make it is a Frenchman who lives in Germany, Jean-Marie Straub. Once before in his past there was something that Straub hated: to serve in the French army and to be sent to Algeria. He found a home, but not peace, in Munich. His film is a cry of anguish from amidst the generation of the desert.

One might have thought that the film would find an echo in Germany. After all, there is at present a great wave of consciousness in German cultural circles about the Nazi past—plays are written, books are published, trials are staged, and a large body of students and intellectuals manifest a curious *Linksdrang* (an obsessive attraction to the left), which is not a real political engagement, but a sort of genteel flirtation with liberalism. This has resulted in some good work, such as the play *Die Ermittlung* (The Investigation), for which Peter Weiss simply edited the verbatim transcripts of the Auschwitz trials into a harrowing abstraction of the meaning of fascism; and some books of absolutely objective reporting on particular elements of Nazism, such as the revolt of the generals or the battle of Berlin. In graphics many artists are attempting to deal squarely with the past, and Germany is still, besides France, the European country with the largest readership of serious writing in newspapers, weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies. Germany's unique position as the only country with an almost completely subsidized stage and many other state-supported cultural disciplines, creates what one would assume to be a fertile soil for conscious reflection.

But what one finds in most places, and in a large segment of the intelligentsia, is a strange mixture of guilt and complacency, of knowledge and ignorance, of an awareness of the past mixed with an abstention from responsibility, and even the many people who will tell you that they "understand," and who will be making obvious and sincere attempts to deal with their own moral position in the juxtaposition of the generations, will do so with an undertone of righteousness, almost unnoticeable, but ever-present, that will keep them eternally from reaching an inner peace. It is a difficult atmosphere to describe—one finds acceptance as one finds its rejection—but often one has the feeling that the tendency to the left, for example, as well as the great admiration for works of art that attack fascism, are simply escape valves for guilt. This whole generation is stuck with its fathers: they are dead and cannot be killed

again, and trials won't resurrect them so they can be changed. The people who make the cultural decisions in today's Germany came out of Egypt, and they haven't learnt freedom. Perhaps they will give way to a new life, to a new generation, but they themselves must probably die without entering the holy land.

For this generation to appreciate a true work of art that has *perspective*, is extremely difficult; and the newly learned methodology of dealing with the past didn't work for *Nicht Versöhnt*. Because this film lays bare precisely the causes for this generation's impotence, it disturbs its peers deeply: you can't be nice to it as you can to a returned Jewish intellectual, and it won't go away or accept reparations. It stands there on the screen like a cold mirror, and it looks squarely back at you, through your closed lids.

One of the preoccupations of today's German is "the overcoming of the past." In German, the word used is *Bewältigung*, which means, in the *literal* sense, "mastering." But even linguistic research proves that this is an "overcoming" very far removed from what that word has come to mean to Americans. The root word is *waltern*, an archaic word meaning to rule, with the connotation of wilfulness. The fact that the German uses it in the sense of "overcoming," reminds us that *waltern* is also at the base of the word *Gewalt*, or brute force, and serves to illuminate further the sad pun of the decline and rise of the master(ing) race.

It is extremely difficult to speak of *Nicht Versöhnt* simply as film, because so much agitation has been caused by it, and because so much of the importance of this work is in its subject. Nevertheless it couldn't be of thematic importance if it were not first a work of art, and it must thus be analyzed on that level before its total effect can be described or evaluated.

In brief, *Nicht Versöhnt* is the "story" of a family in today's Germany, and traces this family, as did author Böll, through three generations. It is also the story of a monastery we never see: built by the father, detonated by the son, it remains a myth for the grandson and the viewer. In like manner, all real things are reduced to the level of myths, or, to use a word which characterizes much of the *form* of the film, to the level of *citations*. And yet, Straub describes his form as "realism."

Straub *cites* reality. He does not reproduce it, reconstruct it, alter it, or even invent it. He does not put something on the screen for the viewer to look at, to listen to, to understand, to identify with, or to get lost in. He says that his sole aim in constructing his films (this is his second) the way he does, is to get from intent to goal in the simplest and fastest manner. Despite this apparent lack of emotionality, one thing is certain: nobody remains cold; his films sweep their viewers to a pitch of either enthusiasm or disdain, but certainly to a pitch. And beyond this force, this film has another, greater, more important force: it can not be disregarded. In fact, it hasn't been.

The images of Straub's films are artless, static, and follow each other in illogical succession. One cannot see the film only once, unless one has read the book; only on second or third viewing does its force erupt. The action, if such there be, is taken apart into segments of time, each of essential significance in the whole. These segments are then shuffled and reorganized in a sequence which tends to increase both the meaning of the action-segments themselves and the meaning of the whole, by creating new, more forceful juxtapositions, interrelations, understatements. For example, Straub cuts segments from the life of the mother into the film not in the order in which they occur, but in the order in which their significance tangles with the continuity of our comprehension, even though the woman may be seventy at one point and twenty-five a moment later, (in which case she is played, of course, by a different actress). We are not being given a clue to her identity when she appears, and understand only from later insight who she had been. Thus the viewer reacts much in the manner in which a human mind works in general: snatches of memory, mixed and garbled in time, unique only in the most personal significance to the ones who remember.

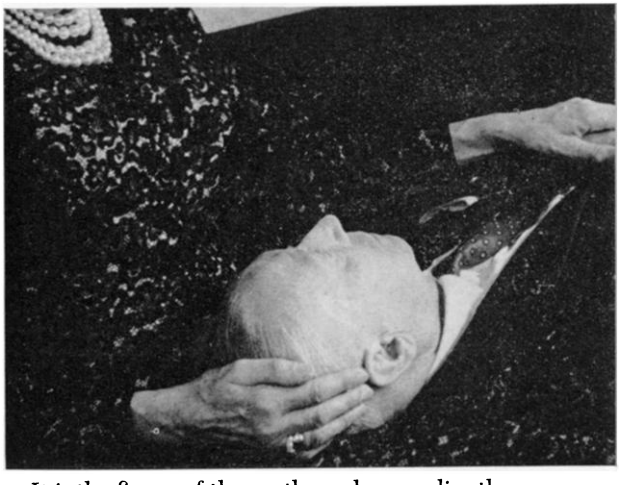
Or take the manner in which Straub uses

words. He refuses to be tied to their accepted meanings alone, and uses them as sound, at the same time omitting all superfluous trappings, such as intonation, grammatical pauses, associative elements of all kinds. His actors (who are not actors, but men and women Straub chose from among his acquaintances) do not "play," they simply *read* the words, or rather, they *cite* them, omitting inflection and stress. In short, Straub has done with words what he has done with time: he has broken them down into their basic ingredients of sound and length, and leaves it to the viewer to reassemble the whole —the action, the time, the meaning of the spoken things.

The central figure, Robert Fähmel, is a forty-year-old civil engineer and pool player (today), who in 1934, when he was eighteen, becomes involved (not "became involved," because we see all actions in the present) in an obscure sort of students' underground group opposing the wave of rising Nazism. Along with his classmate Schrella he must flee to Holland in the wake of a futile attempt on the life of their gymnastics teacher Vacano, who heads a gang of Hitlerist "police auxiliaries" systematically molesting pupils of minority extractions. (Straub very specifically does not cite Jews; a mystic sect, "the lambs," serves as the scapegoat.) Two years later Robert returns to Germany—his influential father has obtained an amnesty for the criminal charge against him. He passes the war as a sapper in the German army ("I provided the German army with its free shooting space, which it had no use for").

Schrella returns after the war, and we are in the present time when the two friends meet. It is the atmosphere of reparation-Germany; Robert takes the apparently undernourished Schrella for a fancy lunch: "A pity—if you could prove that you had to flee for political reasons instead of criminal ones, you could get a nice little restitution payment." Then Straub allows himself the only ostentatious symbolism of the film: Schrella asks the waiter to wrap the remains of his chicken; when the waiter returns, he says, "The fat won't seep through, it's all wrapped in cellophane."

Generations who have put their heads in the laps of their women: the same couple shown at different stages of their lives. The young couple: architect Fämel during World War I—calm, unthinking. His wife is the one concerned. And after World War II: he still sleeps peacefully in her lap, saved by position and complacency. Her face is no longer seen.



It is the figure of the mother who supplies the essential morality of the film-maker, or as much as one can derive from the film. In her monologues—often very long, and apparently jumping from one thing to another, which Straub makes her deliver in an absolute monotone—lies the real attack on contemporary German complacency. Losing her respect for the world as far back as World War I, she registers all the subsequent betrayals in a progressive retirement, but never loses the clarity of her seismographic observation. The following lines, from various parts of the script and all derived from

the original novel, constitute a poesy of unique incision:

"You are still talking to Otto? No success . . . I knew it, but one must always try again, always try again. . . . Time does not penetrate me; not powder and fluff—it's powder and lead that's needed; flags don't kill, my boy. You should have asked me; now he has become commissioner of police. It's war; time is measured in promotions . . . don't go too far with your ideas, don't lose patience, and accept no privileges . . . my children tasted truth on their own lips, but they took me far away from my children. I didn't want to hear the name of salvation, but they stuck it on stamps on their letters and recited the litany: useful, useful, honor-loyalty, conquered but yet unconquered, order; stupid like the earth, deaf like a tree. . . . Harmless? You will soon see of what the harmless are capable; she just kept murmuring 'it's a sin and a shame'—they put her in an asylum to save her, but that's just what killed her: they gave her an injection."

In the course of the second half of the film (approximately), Straub introduces the current existences of all the protagonists, juxtaposed in all cases with images of their genesis as the robots they have become. The father (who looks like and speaks German like Adenauer) who built the monastery that the son destroyed, is seen in flashes significant of his descent, with often a single line of dialogue or a single camera set-up standing for an epoch, much according to Cartier-Bresson's theory of the "essential moment." In a series of intersecting encounters we obtain an image of a generation's soul. In its played-down directness, in its omission of the obvious, in its avoidance of moralizing, in its abstention from apparent judgment, it gives one of the most forceful and devastating portraits of a lost generation.

Nothing ends the film—and this lack of a proper end causes a lack of the kind of relief that usually comes with a dramatic presentation well rounded out. During the preparations for a political rally, the mother, who hears that a former Nazi schoolmate of her son's will be the main speaker, prepares to shoot this man from the balcony of a hotel. "He's in a party, but don't ask me which. Anyway, it's of no importance to know." At the last moment (although I hate to write down this phrase; it implies a dramatic tension which is foreign to the film) someone says to her: "I would rather shoot another. Perhaps you ought to think: the assassin of your grandson is standing on the next balcony—do you see him?" The old woman turns, and emotionlessly shoots her pistol outside of image range, presumably at a man watching the parade from next door.

We have seen her grandson in the film, of course, and the implication is simple: the Nazis of tomorrow are more dangerous than those of yesterday. Again, Straub tells us nothing editorially, the significance and the moral are strictly inherent in the action, photographed to avoid editorial emotion. It is precisely this method of throwing the viewer back onto his own resources, which makes the film such a stock-taking experience, and which makes it so hard for Germans to watch it.

By eliminating time in the traditional sense, Straub has found a first avenue towards realizing the motion picture as the art form that it has the potential to be: the sole art form to work in the fourth dimension: to change, eliminate, recreate, abstract, control—in short, use as a creative element—the factor of time. And precisely through this control-by-elimination of the time factor the film has a larger-than-life time perspective. Omitting the ballast that obscures observation in daily life, Straub cuts to the quick, We are left with a harsh, unrelenting, but absolutely true mirror-image.

Straub's method is uniquely fitting for dealing with contemporary German society—that quiet, ordered, but deep pool of well-mannered taboos. Explanations are not supplied by him. In Germany, explanations are impolite, they are inherent in the fact that one is alive. Each viewer supplies his own explanations. Just as punishment and destruction were handed out by the Nazis without explanation, Straub hands out pangs of consciousness without explanation. The accused always supply the explanation for their punishment—supply their own crimes.

And, as Straub has one of his characters say in the film: "The number of choices has been reduced–"—GIDEON BACHMANN

TO DIE IN MADRID

Produced and edited by Frederic Rossif. Script: Madeleine Chapsal. Narration in English: Sir John Gielgud, Irene Worth, William Hutt, George Gonneau. Music: Maurice Jarre.

During his brief days as a libertarian writer, Charles Baudelaire spoke of the creation of a proletarian class more beautiful than marble statues. And from the beginnings of their war against "bourgeois society" men of letters have searched, not only for ways of bringing about its undoing, but for a vehicle of revolution, which besides being historically "logical" and socially worthy, was lovable, graceful, noble, and dramatic as well. From this point of view the Spanish Civil War, to which this movie is a postscript, was what it has indeed been called, a "poet's war" which brought together the two streams of intellectual indignation and contempt for the modern order; the political and romantic. Some of the emotions of the war were social and ideological: they spoke of Spanish economic conditions, of socialism and liberty, of an irresponsible Church, a parasitical army, and of the invasion of the country by the forces of foreign powers. But others seem to come from the image of Spain prevalent in literary folklore since the nineteenth century: a people free of the modern vices of banality, material greed and cultural philistinism, and possessed of an elemental dignity, an easy realistic wisdom, a rather implacable sense of human "truth," and the capacity to face the "moments" when that truth becomes inescapable. The Spanish Civil War, then, joined the appetites for social justice and for social aesthetics. The doctrinaire and the picturesque. Marx and Hemingway.

The narration of *To Die in Madrid*, somewhat fatuously "sincere" on occasion (a common enough trouble with documentaries), makes an effort to underscore the factual sources of the Spanish conflict: the extremes of poverty and vainglory, the princely landholdings, the millions of illiterates, though it leaves out a more specifically Spanish ingredient: a consuming will to fanatical allegiance in all factions which may have been itself as instrumental as anything else. But the movie cannot altogether avoid the traditions of the Spanish legend. And in this it is true to its subject. For, in a curious and cruel way, the Civil War achieved for Spain a kind of redemption from the obscurity and seedy decline of the post-imperial years. In the enormity of its self-destruction Spain was once again "great," with a greatness which many of her foreign admirers, and just as many of the Spaniards themselves, regarded as the essence of her particular genius: a primitive, majestic gift for confronting the ultimate.

In short, it is difficult to overcome the weight of historical memory, the aura of the event, in discussing *To Die in Madrid* as a piece of "art," even though no one will question that this is one of the best (though not the most impartial) documentaries ever made. The scenes of public acclaim and resolve – electric crowds, politicians holding up truth on the tip of a sky-pointed index finger–of popular bravery, so casual and mystifyingly foolhardy, of life blindly torn, of egregious social crimes, unbending endurance, pathos and ferocity, are so memorable, so classical, so outrageous, that the skill and point of the film's editing disappears beneath them.

The precision of the imagery is remarkable and sure-fire. The German Condor Legion is deadly and stylish. The Italian officers dandified and unconvincing (at the Battle of Guadalajara they were also to show themselves more interested in survival than in historical missions). The Spaniards appear raggle-taggle, unruly, and almost innocently reckless. As we know now, the famous episode of the Toledo Alcazar could only have been the product of an extravagant and archaic concept of manly prowess; the fortress was nearly impossible to take just as it was unimportant to defend.

The Spanish Civil War remains a great memory partly because the defeat of the Republic may have spared its admirers the self-

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The Spanish Civil War remains a great memory partly because the defeat of the Republic may have spared its admirers the self-

betrayal which has accompanied every curdled utopia since the French Revolution. And from the distance of thirty years one can point to a few ironies and a number of remaining fears. In some respects history has won out over the Nationalist victory. The Falange withered and the bourgeois ideals which really guided the early days of the Republic have asserted themselves in the increasingly middle-class and urban character of Spain today. And yet, those who have visited the country recently and frequently must wonder whether the nakedness of certain aspects of Spanish self-centeredness, the habits of stony dismissal of all contrary opinion, and the depth of repressed violence which is still perceivable—and most of which is not traceable to purely political questions—could have been remedied by a different outcome of the war. In this respect the most lasting recollection of *To Die in Madrid* is that of one of its early scenes. Not a battlefield, nor an execution wall, but a village street littered with the bodies of unarmed men in work clothes. The movie does not say who were the killers and who were the victims. But we know that they are only a few of the tens of thousands shot and murdered behind the lines in the early days of the conflict.

There is a musical score which may strike some as artfully but uncomfortably pseudo-folk, and others as a thoughtful elegy for the tragedy of the war and the timeless spirit of Spain. In any case, it does not distract one from the melancholy and unsparing grit of the events in the movie, or from the hopeless admiration which they frequently arouse.—CÉSAR GRAÑA

FIVE FROM THE EAST

The five East European entries at the recent San Francisco Film Festival were an interesting guide to what is happening on the screen behind the Iron Curtain. Most significant, although not exactly revolutionary (if you'll pardon the expression), are the indications that directors there are experimenting with modes other than sentimental realism. In a way this is too bad, because it has always been reassuring to know that the Communists were still affirming the human condition, and that if you wanted to feel good, you could always go see the latest Vague Rouge production.

The two Russian entries provide a good starting point: *A Soldier's Father* is fairly typical of the traditional Russian approach to realism, while *Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors*, though a historical romance, is exotic enough to qualify as a fantasy. *The Soldier's Father* is a good piece of story-telling, with solid but unimaginative camera work and a fine central figure (Sergo Zakariadze), an old Georgian farmer who sets out to visit his tank-officer son in a front-line hospital and ends up a soldier himself, fighting and looking for his son all the way into Germany. Eventually, during a battle interlude, he finds him—only to see him killed. The situation is unlikely and the coincidence upon which the final tragedy turns is highly improbable, but the film is rescued by the immaculate performance of Zakariadze. The attitude expressed toward the old peasant is typically Russian in its sentimentality toward the worker type, but the force of the old man's goodness makes the type believable. Since the camera seldom leaves his shrewd, grizzled, impassive face, seldom abandons his heavy, bear-like gait, we accept the attendant patriotic mush without much thought. In the theater, after all, second thoughts don't count.

The high point in the film occurs when the old man prevents a Russian tank from plowing through a German vineyard, scolding the tank commander as if he were his father. In real life, one expects, the tank would have made grape juice out of the old guy, but because we have come to believe in the miracles of oratory and endurance that the Father has demonstrated, we are able to assimilate this unlikely episode. Where *Soldier's Father* fails miserably is in the battle scenes, which are badly fumbled, with harmless puffs of smoke passed off as exploding shells and battles fought between large masses of men who stand erect firing at each other. Question: what to make of the fact that American war films have technically excellent battle

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scenes and pasteboard heroes, while the Russians tend to have wretched battles and believable soldiers?

If *Soldier's Father* lacks the attention to technical detail which makes sentimental realism acceptable if not believable, *Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors* lacks that threshold of realism which is necessary to complete fantasy. The film starts with the tragic boyhood of the hero, and there are few child actors who can earn complete sympathy and attention. The deficiencies of performance are in some way compensated by the gorgeous, even voluptuous use of color—the exotic costumes and rituals of the Carpathian villagers which occupy the opening scenes. Even when the story begins to grow in interest, it is these elements which dominate, which give the film its character. As in most fantasies, event is only a skeleton by which to support atmospheric scenery. And yet, as the film progresses, one begins to see a delicate, metaphorical relationship between the scenery and the mythic elements of the story.

Shadows concerns the tragic tale of a Carpathian youth who falls in love with the daughter of the man who killed his father (shadows of unforgotten Shakespeare!). Dirt poor, he leaves home to work in the hills as a shepherd and support his bitter, widowed mother. His sweetheart, by now carrying his bastard child, sets off after him one day but falls in the river and drowns. After a long period of mourning and hermit-like wandering, the youth (now a man) marries a woman he does not love. Their marriage is a misery, and the woman is forced to resort to sorcery in an attempt to attract her husband and have the child she wants. There follows one of the most naked naked scenes I have ever seen outside of a Legion Hall, but despite all her efforts, the wife only succeeds in attracting the sorcerer himself. He, seizing an opportunity and an ax, frees the husband to join his dead beloved.

These are the materials of folk tale and legend, and it is director Sergey Paradjanov's unquestioning acceptance of those materials which makes *Shadows* such an absorbing, charming film. It may need pointing out, also, that these are also the materials of grand opera and ballet, and much of the beauty of *Shadows* undoubtedly may be credited to the Russians' long involvement with those most pageant-like of arts. By adapting the rituals and mystical rites of the mountain men to the formalized aesthetic of opera, emphasizing matters of costume and setting, Paradjanov elevates his folk tale into high fantasy. As might be expected, the characters in the story are little more than types, and the quality of the actors' performances cannot be taken as a sign of their native ability. They are but part of a highly sensuous whole, an opera in all but the presence of songs. Although I cannot say I was swept up into Paradjanov's occult world (the Russian penchant for melodrama always places a barrier between the screen and a western audience), I will say that I was fascinated by it.

A different kind of fantasy was offered by the Polish entry, a film version of Potocki's *Saragossa Manuscript*. Potocki's book, a picaresque collection of tales given unity by a loose narrative frame, is a masterpiece of the gothic mode, and is about as far as one can get from the simple, archetypal dimensions of folk tale. Story unfolds within story, like some elaborate toy fashioned for an emperor's amusement, and the whole depends upon the complexity of its parts for effect. A strange vehicle for a Polish film, certainly, especially when one considers its decadent qualities—mannerism and the sacrifice of reality for a tour de force of artifice. Set (apparently) in eighteenth-century Spain, and starring Zbigniew Cybulski as the bewildered young man to whom all the stories are told, the film is a witty, ebullient exercise, a delight to watch despite its length (almost three hours) because of the variety of scenes, characters, and events. It must be said, however, that the Poles are perhaps not the best people for such an exercise, having traveled some way from the French influence under which Potocki was writing. The humor tends to be overdone and heavy-handed, and—as an American—I was a little put off by Polish actors playing Spanish nobles, courtiers, and quacks. But since the thing was obviously undertaken with as light a heart as

SHOP ON HIGH STREET

the cast could (collectively) summon, this should be taken as a minor objection. I hope that *The Saragossa Manuscript* is circulated in this country; it is likely to become a classic, not only because it is a close rendition of a masterpiece, but because it is one of those films which should appeal to adults and children alike.

Like the Russian entries, the two Czech films provided an interesting contrast. Here, between types of realism: the one an attempt to document the assassination of Heydrich and its disastrous aftermath of reprisals; the other a study of the effect on one individual of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, with its gradually implemented persecution of the Jews. The first, based on specific historical event, attempts to be as documentary as any after-the-fact recounting can possibly be; the other, by careful selection and concentration, tends toward the universality of parable. Of the two, I found the parabolic *A Shop on High Street* more satisfactory, although blighted by an unfortunate sentimentality.

For one thing, *The Assassination* was confusing. A Czech audience, familiar with the historical circumstances, would probably have no trouble in following the events and understanding their meaning, but I found it very difficult to tell what was going on during the first part of the film—a confusion which was not helped by my inability to distinguish between the many members of the assassin group (Czech soldiers trained in England and parachuted into their homeland with orders to assist the resistance movement). This confusion may have been the result of a conscious attempt on the part of the director (Jiri Sequens) to create a mass hero, but since the dénouement depended upon the psychology of betrayal, upon the weakness of one man of several, it added up to bewilderment.

The appeal of any conspiracy film, from *Rififi* to *League of Gentlemen*, depends upon two general qualities. The first is the establishment of individual characters, each with their identifiable traits; the second is a scrupulous attention to the details of the planning that goes into a murder, a robbery, or a prison break, the careful coordination that pulls the disparate members into a single, efficient unit. *The Assassination* failed in both regards: not only were the assassins virtually anonymous, but the circumstances of the actual event—the soldiers' rather sudden inspiration to kill Heydrich—put the assassination itself into a relatively minor position in the total story. Another potential dimension, the tension arising from Resistance objection to the assassination plot, was passed over quickly, and the horrid aftermath—ironic in view of the aims of the assassins—was not much stressed either. What we were given was nothing more than a spotty account of the venture, and it was only during the last quarter of the film, when the assassins are trapped in a cathedral crypt, that any real drama was produced. But even this episode was gratuitous, since the emphasis of the film seemed to be on the play of politics, wills, and the chanceness of events by which history is made. To end by making heroes out of a band of mistaken men is surely to negate the import of the story at large, and if they *were* supposed to be heroes, they resembled drowning rats too closely for comfort.

A Shop on High Street, like *A Soldier's Father*, is an exercise in sentimentality—here a much more dangerous variety. The subject is the Nazi persecution of the Jews, but the treatment resembles a reverse aspirin: bitter outside, sweet at the center. The Nazis are nasty, naturally, and the poor Jews are their old gently ironic selves, all stoic shrug and pitiful lambs-eyes toward the butcher. As an intelligent examination of the persecution and the Jews' reactions to it, *A Shop* is a flop: complexities

are reduced to the cheapest formulas, and the problem is summarized as simply as possible (we wanted their dough). It does not much aid the aims of tolerance to substitute one stereotype (kind, generous, tidy) for another (mean, greedy, greasy). It may, however, ease a bit the burden of guilt.

As in *A Soldier's Father,* realism is maintained by the performance of the starring actor—here, Josef Kroner as an unemployed carpenter who, through the influence of his blow-hard Nazi brother-in-law, becomes the Aryan "controller" of an elderly widow who runs the titular button-shop. The opening scenes of the film are particularly fine, and as the camera follows the good-hearted but unambitious carpenter while he rambles about town with his dog, he gradually comes to resemble a Slovakian Rip Van Winkle. His rectitude and essential humanity are firmly established, so that by the time his brother-in-law (whom he despises), with the aid of his shrewish wife, gets him to accept the political plum which is supposed to make him rich, the rest of the events unfold with complete likeliness. The widow, it turns out, is a pauper, maintained secretly by the other Jews in town, and the Aryan finds himself listed on the Jewish dole as well. This comic turn is bolstered by his gradual befuddled involvement in the life of the old lady, a development brought to a halt by an order for the relocation of the Jews. The drunken agony of the carpenter, the sudden realization of the deaf, dreamy old woman that a "pogrom" is taking place, and the consequent horror and confusion are completely believable. The "tragic" ending, however, I thought rather cheaply obtained, and what follows, a warm bath of pure sentimental fantasy, destroys much of the effectiveness of the parable. Unbearable as they are, the old lady's death and the carpenter's suicide tie a knot of truth that the schmaltzy "resurrection" turns into a pretty ornamental bow.

Also working against the believability of the story is the character of the shopkeeper as interpreted by Ida Kaminska. Little old lady shopkeepers, whether Jews, Aryans, or Chinese, just aren't *that* sweet. I don't wish to work this point to death, but the film was received so enthusiastically in New York (following its debut in San Francisco), that a few sour words are needed. *A Shop on High Street,* like *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* is a sentimental treatment of a tragic, complex situation. Mrs. Stowe's book made some attempt to mitigate the melodrama in her material, but when her novel was dramatized, all the stops were pulled. The result was a stereotype impressed on the public mind for over a half century, an image that will take perhaps another fifty years to erase. *The Diary of Anne Frank* moved beyond the specific instance and issue to frame a universal situation, in which the Jewishness of the participants was almost of no importance. *A Shop on High Street,* unfortunately, peddles a different line of merchandise, boxes which look full, but which are found to be empty when opened.—JOHN SEELYE

THE GROUP

Director: Sidney Lumet. Producer: Sidney Buchman. Script: Buchman, based on the novel by Mary McCarthy. Photography: Boris Kaufman. Music: Charles Gross.

A lot of everything went into *The Group*: a lot of direction by Sidney Lumet, a lot of promotion, a lot of beautiful young actresses, and a lot of 1930's *mise-en-scène.* It has a lot of stories, a lot of thoughts about sex, politics, and woman's aspiration, and lots of earnest intentions. What

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"What we recognize as reality in these figures is their implacable resistance to change; they are what perdures or remains—the monoliths or plinths of the world. . . .

"The comic element is the incorrigible element in every human being; the capacity to learn, from experience or instruction, is what is forbidden to all comic creations and to what is comic in you and me. This capacity to learn is the prerogative of the hero or the heroine: Prince Hal as opposed to Falstaff. The principle of growth in human being is as real, of course (though possibly not so common) as the principle of eternity or inertia represented by the comic; it is the subjective as opposed to the elective. When we identify ourselves with the hero of a story, we are following him with all our hopes, i.e., with our subjective conviction of human freedom; on the comic characters we look with despair, in which, though, there is a queer kind of admiration—we really, I believe, admire the comic characters *more* than we do the hero or heroine, because of their obstinate power to do-it-again, combined with a total lack of self-consciousness or shame."—Mary McCarthy in "Characters in Fiction," *Partisan Review*, *Spring*, 1961; reprinted by permission.

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As everybody must know by now, it's about a gaggle of Vassarites who graduate into the Depression full of seriousness and passion, and fail. They fail in all possible ways: one fails to save the world, one fails to find love, one fails to achieve climax, one fails to nurse her baby, one fails to become a writer, and so forth, with much overlap. Neither Lumet nor his uneven cast seems to have any idea why they failed, except that the Depression was a pretty grim time—but since the period is, in fact, ruthlessly patronized throughout, nothing really comes of that. The screenplay seems to be trying to make the picture be about the thirties by switching rapidly from one story to another, but since the girls are all of the same gushily insipid kind this merely creates vertigo, and the unevenness of the actresses adds to the feeling of fragmentation.

One girl's story (Kay's) seems to be intended to tie the whole thing together, since the movie begins with her wedding and ends with her funeral, but I couldn't figure out Kay's story at all, partly because the actress Joanna Pettet clearly knew that she had a juicy part so played it throughout in her juiciest voice.

I liked: Joan Hackett's early scenes as Dolly, and the bit about Polly (Shirley Knight) and her mad father. I just hope that young people don't get the idea from *The Group* that the Great Depression was nothing but a state of mind which oppressed female intellectuals-*manqués* for a few years before World War II.

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THE SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD

Produced and directed by Martin Ritt. Script: Paul Dehn, Guy Trosper, based on the novel by John Le Carré. Photography: Oswald Morris. Music: Sol Kaplan.

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We are flooded these days with spy movies, glorious widescreen color views of superhuman, hence unhuman, men – inspiring, up-lifting,

cheering adventures. In these movies the spy, in the tradition of the detective story and the western, is a loner, an alien whom no one understands, to whom no one is equal because he is so good at his job—that of protecting a conventional society too inept to protect itself. Where would society be without Sam Spade and the Lone Ranger and Shane and now Harper—those miracle men who come in, fix everything, and move on? The spies obliterate the plots, which are at best simple-minded chases embellished with coincidences, nonsense, and toothpaste tubes that shoot bullets. How it all ends is never at issue; it awaits only the introduction of the bad guy to know exactly who will be laid out.

Lesser men have dreams of glory about violence, about their prowess with women, their ability to hold their liquor, their cool, masterful card-playing, their magnificent quick-wittedness in crises—dreams, in other words, of predatory power by those who in reality are victims of others' predatoriness. For lesser men, guns and cars and planes have great symbolic significance. Not so for our James Bond. The embodiment of everyone's fantasies, preoccupied with women and cars and guns and violence, the spy has no dreams of glory—he has no time for them. He doesn't look back, he doesn't look forward, he doesn't anticipate consequences of his actions, he doesn't regret his actions. He is not committed to people or ideas, and geography, not ideology, seems to dictate what side he is on. The films that he is in have no conscience and no commitment. There must be an enemy, of course, but he is vague, representing what, one hardly knows.

The camp fashion has enabled these movies to be praised and enjoyed by large numbers of people who previously could not have allowed themselves that pleasure, people whose commitments are confused. Under the pretense that their interest is satiric, they can go and admire the bosoms and the blood-letting along with all those who have always known they liked bosoms and blood-letting.

As some sort of answer to the Bond-and-so-forth movies *The Ipcress File* came along, an effort to spoof the genre, although the genre, God knows, is its own spoof. With a plot somewhat more elaborate than the others, it is about the efforts of British secret agents to find the answer to a "Brain Drain," the mysterious disappearance from government service of many top scientists, just at the peak of their productivity.

The movie has an interesting pitch. Billed as the thinking man's *Goldfinger*, it has what it supposes to be a real intellectual for a hero. You can tell that Harry Palmer is an intellectual because he likes Mozart and disdains military band music; he is not handsome, he wears glasses with thick lenses; he is a gourmet and uses a lot of green peppers and onions in his cooking; and before he makes a pot of coffee he grinds the beans himself. You cannot however tell that he is an intellectual by anything he says. Maybe that is because he is a secret agent.

What distinguishes him from Bond? Again he is a loner, defending a government so imperceptive that it has installed an enemy agent in a high position to guard the nation's security. Palmer does not have Bond's unlimited funds. He lives in a seedy flat where paint is peeling in the hall (although color photography manages to make even that look rather pretty). He limits his activities to one woman, although we are meant to understand that he is irresistible and that this one has been preceded and will be followed by many. Most important, the members of James Bond's audience are not to think that they can succeed at what he does; they know they cannot. But Harry Palmer is a bit of another story—he is only slightly less superhuman than Bond when it comes to surviving, but he is not appreciated as such by others and in fact is regarded as a little silly. Just as those pop-art Campbell soup cans and hot dog ads have the effect of indicating that anyone can do it, so the character of Harry Palmer begins to suggest that anyone can do it.

And the movie? Outside of some nice details (the use of ordinary noises, footsteps, doors slamming, that sort of thing; the view of insubordination to one's superior officer as an admirable attribute for a hero—hardly a novel view but always an attractive one, this time made more interesting by the fact that the superior officer thinks it admirable), there is little to rec-

ommend it. If you are a non-thinker, why go here instead of to Bond, where there are many more bosoms, more cars, more guns, more blood, more exotic landscapes? And if you are a thinker, you will not find anything to think about here. Logic has been suspended. Character has nothing to do with action. Effect cannot be counted on to follow cause. And this is not to indicate the discontinuity of life, its undependability, its slipperiness, but merely to manipulate the plot and prolong the suspense. The point of a thriller is to find out who did it. What does it matter who did it if the decision seems to have been made arbitrarily? "Let's say *that* one did it!" say the writers and director, and proceed to point the camera somewhere else any time it would be reasonable for the villain to give the audience a clue. The plot is a little more important than in a Bond movie, not because it is developed any more reasonably, but because we are spared such indignities as Pussy Galore and her low-flying girl DDT sprayers.

With *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold* we have another matter entirely. I take seriously this business of color and black-and-white films. Until they can make a color film that can really communicate ugliness, I think choosing color or black-and-white will continue to be a good measure of whether a film-maker has serious intentions. Martin Ritt's intentions were certainly serious; the result is an anti-Bond, complexly plotted, curiously dull film, puzzling where it should be interesting, boring where it should be exciting.

Alec Leamas (Richard Burton), head of operations for the British secret service in Berlin, fails to get an agent across from East Berlin at Checkpoint Charlie. He is called back to London, sniffed at and mildly reprimanded by Control, the chief of operations, who suggests he try a desk job for a while. The scene ends before this interview is over. Next we see Leamas, collar up, unshaven, hair askew, bleary-eyed, shambling through London to the Labor Exchange, looking for a job. The audience is made to think (or wonder if) he has been fired from the service. He gets a job as a librarian, has a mild affair with Nan Perry (Claire Bloom), a fellow employee and a member of the British Communist Party, drinks a lot, beats up a grocery clerk who won't give him credit, goes to jail, is fired from his job, leaves jail, and is approached by someone with a vague job offer, all this taking we know not how many days, weeks, months. Then the audience discovers that this downhill progress has been a fake, part of an intricate scheme of Control's to make Leamas appear a likely defector to be contacted as such by the East. Leamas will presumably defect to the East, where he is to bring about the downfall of Franz Mundt (the top intelligence man in the East) by convincing Fiedler (the second to the top) that Mundt is really a British agent. However, Leamas is the dupe of Control and is unknowingly involved in a quite different plot. The audience, as duped as he, follows him through its intricacies to its success, totally opposite to the result he thought he had been working for.

Leamas is not a car fancier and is rarely even seen in one. He doesn't seem to have a gun. His toothpaste doesn't shoot bullets; one rather doubts that he owns any toothpaste. He is not a connoisseur of fine wines and liquors, he is just a drinker. He is a man alone who knows he puts anyone he is friendly with in jeopardy, not only from the other side but from his side. He has an apprehension, which proves quite correct, that this could happen to Nan, that her relationship with him will involve her in the plot.

A fundamental weakness in the movie is that it pussyfoots so delicately around questions of morality and politics. Presumably politics provides the foundation of the story—that is one of the reasons it rises above the Fu Manchu plot line of the Bonds. But after the opening Berlin sequence this is lost sight of; the film becomes almost an abstract constellation of characters. The fates of Mundt and Fiedler are supposedly of paramount political significance, but their politics are barely at issue; it is their personalities and the perversities of their fate which are made to concern us. Mundt is evil and must be saved, Fiedler is the honest man, the man of principle, the only one who does not lie, and he must be destroyed, and that is the irony.

Oskar Werner and Richard Burton in THE SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD.

Much of the film's ultimate effect somes from the strength of the scene, almost at the end, when Leamas explains to Nan what has happened. That spying is a dirty, corrupting business in which one kills one's friends and can be killed by one's friends and betrayed by one's country for what seem necessary reasons—this appears to be such a piercing truth, its effect is retrospectively applied to the rest of the film. But this sanctifies the movie in a way it does not deserve, for it is only when Leamas himself has been disastrously used that he finds his morality assaulted. One wonders what his reaction would have been had he known ahead of time that it was Mundt who was the friend and Fiedler the enemy. What if Leamas had been approached honestly by Control and told: We must save Mundt, and this is how we will do it. And while we're at it, why not finish Fiedler? He's too smart, and besides, he's a Jew. Would Leamas have found it an objectionable assignment?

Leamas is an interesting example of the alienated hero because he discovers in the end that he too, along with all those people he's been saving, is the victim of society, a society that after all is not inept but is vicious and has gotten him to do its vicious work. When the only people worth saving, Nan and Fiedler, are killed, Leamas chooses to die himself.

There seem to me to be many mistakes in the conception of the movie. The character of Leamas suffers from what I think is an unintentional incoherence that fuddles the viewer. In the movie's terms he is a hero. Then why has the true nature of what he is doing never occurred to him before? What is his commitment to his side other than that he once saw two trucks (presumably driven by Communists) converging on a station wagon with children in it? He is no superman. He is depressed and depressing, humorless, a man at the end of his rope. But why? Eighteen years of spying could take a lot out of a man, but Leamas seems to have no qualms or squeamishness about his past. It's a job, he says; he's a technician, and he does it for money.

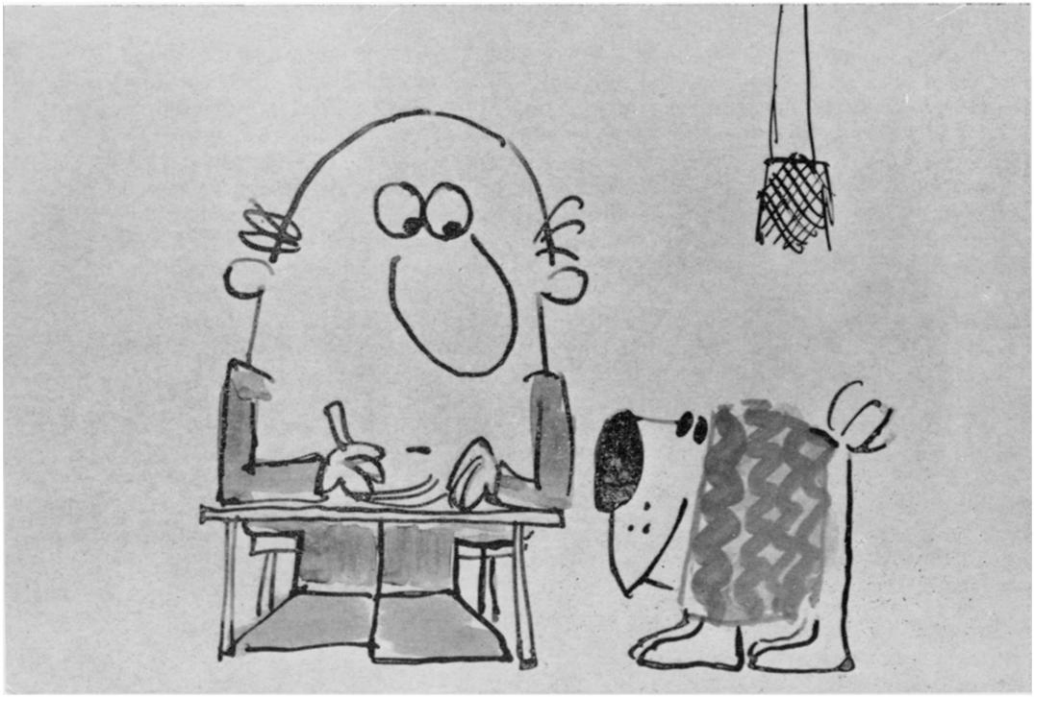
The suspense is badly handled. Ritt seems to depend on his audience's general familiarity with the novel; it is left unclear to one who has

not read it whether Leamas' skid after his first interview with Control is real or not. And later there is only one hint given that something is going on that Leamas does not know about: the fact that Nan is approached by one of Control's underlings. But this hint is not enough to make the audience suspect the true plot, so that until almost the end the story progresses on one monotonous level, the interest hinging only on whether the plot that Leamas and the audience think he is engaged in will work. There are no overtones to vibrate the viewers' sensibilities, and, when it is all over, this turns out to have had a disintegrative effect.

The casting of two of the three major parts accounts for much of the film's fuzziness. Claire Bloom, as Nan, seems too young, too pretty, too immature, too sweet to make her role credible. And Richard Burton—well, he has a big voice which sometimes, for variety and to indicate passion, he constricts into a snarl, and every once in a while he changes his facial expression, but it is apparent after he has delivered his first two lines what an extraordinarily superficial performance he is going to give. On the other hand, Oskar Werner, as Fiedler, is very fine indeed. The final impact of the movie is primarily due to him—because one cares about Fiedler's morality and his fate. (Perhaps the most civilized thing in the movie is its sympathetic treatment of Nan and Fiedler—both of whom are dedicated Communists, of course.)

There is no doubt that the film is a failure, because after tipping one's hat to seriousness of purpose there is too little focus and coherence for it to be a memorable experience. It is interesting to compare it to *On the Waterfront*, another movie with great seriousness of purpose. Both protagonists are duped by their society. Terry lures Joey to the roof to be pushed off by Johnny Friendly's gorillas; Leamas traps and destroys Fiedler. Both are aliens. In the terms of *On the Waterfront*, Terry opts to become a man and to join society. Leamas finds his society finally unjoinable, and he opts out.

On the Waterfront, like *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold*, is a weak movie, a confused movie. Even more, at times it is an evil movie, but it is one that will always have to be considered, because in Marlon Brando's Terry it had the greatest performance of our time, a hair-raisingly beautiful performance. *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* has nothing in that league to save it.—ELINOR HALPRIN



THE INSECTS.

Short Films

THE TOP

Direction, story, and animation by Jimmy Murakami. Voices: Paul Shively and Fred Wolf. Editing: Rich Harrison. Contemporary Films.

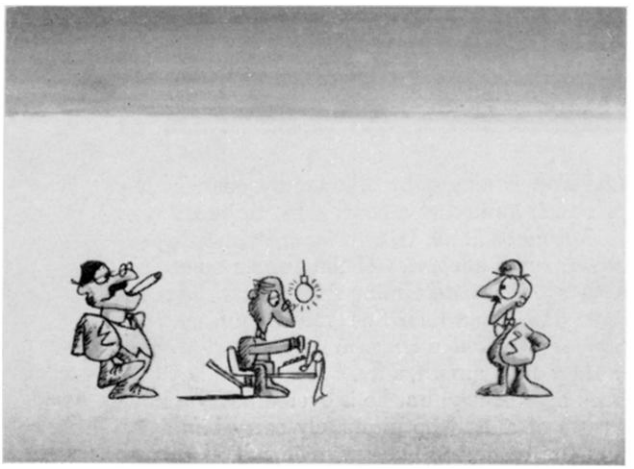
THE BIRD

Direction, story and animation by Fred Wolf. Music: Paul Horn. Editing: Rich Harrison. Camera: Wally Bullock. Contemporary Films.

"For years animators in the Hollywood bullpens have been upset by what mass production did to their medium. They always found more aesthetic satisfaction in a pencil test—rough outline figures hastily photographed—than in the same scene after "finish." The life is sapped out of animation when it is cleaned up. Now we are seeing animators putting all their attention into animation *(with much complex internal movement of the figures, and movements carried out in full detail) as opposed to other production values like background painting or involved ink and paint work. The old UPA films were an economic compromise with the prevailing cartoon standards of their day. They realized a savings by using "limited" animation — i.e., repeated cells, repeated cycles of movement, and so on—but with a lot of money spent on designs and backgrounds. Today we see a return to animation pure and simple, reminiscent in some degree of the very beginnings of the medium. What animation strives for today is a magic balance between crudeness and subtlety —the broken, shaded, lost and found line, as opposed to the sterile, single-thickness line. The magic has come back into the medium because it can now retain the direct, searching quality of art."*—BENJAMIN JACKSON

In a sense, of course, all animation is magical: for among film genres it alone *creates* movement, where photography can only record it. But the magic of today's "back-to-the-roots" school, of which Murakami and Wolf are part, is a wry rather than fulsome type. Murakami's *The Top* is almost breathtakingly austere. His palette is limited to a few colors; he never uses backgrounds at all. His stories are also stripped-down: small allegories of the human condition, with a certain determined fierceness. *The Insects*, the film which first gained him recognition, is about a man who is trying to write; bothered by a moth, a fly, a bee, a flea, he fights back ingeniously; but he is overcome by a huge swarm of ants, who ultimately carry him away into the distance. The space in which this all takes place is vaguely greenish but undefined; and it is quite flat. This acceptance of the flatness of the drawing surface is carried even further in *The Top*, a more complex film, divided into compact, self-contained "acts," separated by instants of blank white screen. The events are organized across the screen almost like action on a stage; and "the top," the objective of the characters striving "for success and power" is a reddish cloudlike strip across the frame top, rather like the flies on a stage. There is also a vaguely defined surface upon which the characters, most of the time, are seen to stand; but the space is essentially empty and flat.

As with any good animated film, the action of *The Top* is hard to describe; for so much of the "content" is tempo, pace, and the curious nonverbal effects of minutely changing expressions or postures. (Criticism of novels and short stories has, over the years, given us an ample vocabulary for discussing plot and character in the dramatic film; but the thinness of our thinking about film style *as such* is particularly clear in what has been written of animation.) To describe what is funny or moving about *The Top* one must get down to small questions of texture; the rhythm which is set up, for instance, as a meek clerk-like figure is rewarded by being cranked up, as if on a barber chair, a little way toward the top, then given a cigar, but then cranked down again—and further, all the way into the ground. This sequence of events succeeds or fails for the same reasons a musical phrase does: it must have grace, and variety, and an underlying but not obvious beat; and it must be set in a coherent relation with the rest of the piece. *The Top*, obviously, is

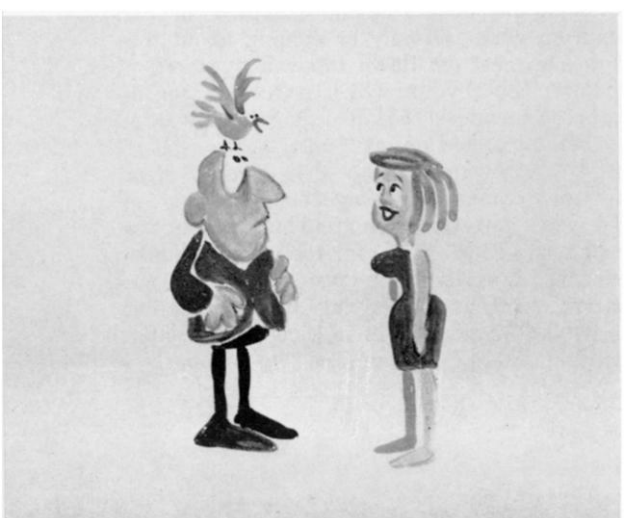


THE TOP.

a theme-and-variations; the attempts to reach the top become more frenetic as it proceeds, and finally a villain who has gotten up there lassos a girl from an aspiring family group. A slightly accelerated, hokey, unintelligible hymn breaks out on the soundtrack, which heretofore has carried a very ingenious series of mumbles, grunts, pseudo-words, and so on—sounds which are, so to speak, human speech with the meaning taken out. (These were recorded, without benefit of electronic hocus-pocus, by Paul Shively and Fred Wolf.)

The Bird, by Fred Wolf, who is now Murakami's partner, is generally in the style of George Dunning's *The Flying Man*: there are no outlines to the figures as in Murakami's films, and they are constructed out of bold brush strokes which are often left to stand as such.

THE BIRD.



Here again, the backgrounds are blank; a rather grim parable unfolds in a white space. A man who has kicked a small pigeon-like bird (with the predictable consequence) sees a pretty girl petting the bird, picks her up, and seduces her (the screen goes to over-all abstract shapes, but this would-be parody doesn't work very well in the context). As they lie quietly together, the bird returns; the man seizes it, and after a moment disgorges its wishbone, which he leaves on the girl's head as he goes away. The delicately sardonic tone of this film is enhanced by a jazz flute score, composed and played by Paul Horn.

Murakami and Wolf are now attempting to sustain in Hollywood the independence which has been achieved by quite a number of London animators in recent years. The system in principle is simple: you live by doing hack commercials for television, and spend some of the profits on your own films, which you can therefore make any damn way you please. But the pressures of work and of costs (and also of "success") make this harder to stick to in Hollywood; the problems, Murakami says wistfully, are "time and exhaustion." He wishes they could somehow get away from the commercials; films aimed at theaters are what he really wants to do. European distribution returns are fairly sizeable: they covered his investment on *The Insects*, for example. But American animation returns are small, even with an Academy Award film, and it seems likely that Murakami-Wolf Films will have to continue surviving on commercials.

However, Murakami is hard at work on *The Good Friends*, which he describes as "quite a bitter film," and which will be made with different techniques. Its characters are always handing on people to others who don't care, in IBM-like patterns; and it climaxes with a triangle situation that promises to be very weird indeed. We have come a long way since Disney.

—ERNEST CALLENBACH

SCHMEERGUNTZ

By Gunvor Nelson and Dorothy Wiley. Distribution: Nelson, Muir Beach, Via Sausalito, California. 16 min.

Home-made in the best sense of the word, *Schmeerguntz* is one long raucous belch in the face of the American Home. It wallows in the putrified ultra-American form of what Godard was (in his still civilized way) dealing with in *The Married Woman*. But it makes the life of Godard's effectively childless, wistfully romantic heroine seem delightfully soulful.

Its elements are unprepossessing—in fact revolting. Random items from the public, sanitized, ad-glamorized American scene are thrown rapid-fire against homey shots of the unmentionable side of the Home: the guck in the kitchen sink, the dirty clothes mountain, the squalling infants, the filthy rump, the used kotex. Even Motherhood gets its knocks: after an organ prelude with shots of the moon, an incredibly distended belly and a funny problem with dressing, followed by doleful pregnancy exercises and recurrent urps in the toilet.

The film operates as a non-stop counterpoint of the Ideal and the Real, with both suffering: for the latter makes the former look cheap and grotesque, while the former makes the latter look intolerably grubby. Although the technique is simple and slapdash, it is effective, and the juxtapositions are often cruelly comic. Over a sylvan scene a TV reporter recounts, deadpan, an item of mob behavior (in Watts?), quoting participants saying "Kill! Kill!" After a series of fetal drawings come a child's voice from a story-telling session, "O Hansel you're so clever!"—over the wiping of babyshit. Random asinine quotes from the public media abound, and are used in an offhand savage way, stripped from immediate context yet horribly relevant in a larger way: "Johnson has thus been able to make decisions. [pause] Hubert Humphrey has made none." Much of the iconography is of course not new in this satiric genre, which is well trodden by experimental film-makers, but it is used here with great effect—the roller-derby females, the Miss America contests, the endless ads—because it is constantly and not just generally undercut, and by what we see rather than by what we may believe.

A society which hides its animal functions beneath a shiny public surface deserves to have such films as *Schmeerguntz* shown everywhere—in every PTA, every Rotary Club, every garden club in the land. For it is brash enough, brazen enough, and funny enough to purge the soul of every harried American married woman.

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Entertainments

R. M. HODGENS*

Born Free was supposedly rejected as a Disney project because animal experts feared the mauling of actors. But producer Carl Foreman went ahead, working behind heavy wire screens; he had his actors spend months living with a pride of 19 lions. The results are remarkable. The dozen cats who portray Elsa at various ages are photographed without the tell-tale flatness of the telephoto lens; there are only a handful of places where coy editing is used to dupe the viewer. The magnificent depth of field and the startling intimacy of the animals testify to the integrity of the filming. But this technical achievement is drowned in vacillating direction, a maudlin soundtrack, and soap-opera histrionics. Director James Hill was luckily unable to get slushy acting out of the animals, but he succeeded egregiously with the people; and the editing plays every scene for its maximum corn content. With its focus split between Elsa and her problems and the Adamsons' undercurrent of neurosis (Joy refers to her husband as "Father" when talking to the lion) the film as a whole lacks cohesion and continuity. Its most moving passages come when showing Elsa's transition from household pet to jungle hunter: a

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Lord Love A Duck. So bad a movie to be so well acted: Ruth Gordon is theatrical as ever and Max Showalter (a fairly good actor when he used to be called Casey Adams) obnoxious. But Roddy McDowall, Tuesday Weld, Harvey Korman, Martin Gable, Martin West, and particularly Lola Albright give George Axelrod's largely inane screenplay a splendor it scarcely deserves. The film is not totally devoid of bright, inventive moments. But, for the most part, by trying to touch all bases in true "black humor" style, Axelrod winds up somewhere out in left field. Admittedly, Axelrod has picked up much in the way of movie-making mechanics from his previous co-worker, John Frankenheimer of *The Manchurian Candidate*: if anything can be said for *Lord Love a Duck*, it can be credited with being that increasingly rare specimen, an unconventional Hollywood movie. But being unable to predict the plot isn't everything. Sometimes, orthodoxy can be a blessing. And Axelrod has yet to learn, as Frankenheimer and Stanley Kubrick have so vividly demonstrated, that, even in black comedy, taste is the arbiter.—DAN BATES

Made in Paris. This slick and expensive film is the type of formula nonsense Metro still manages to turn out. It tells about the lovely and desirable virgin who is pursued hungrily by any number of males, but who remains aloof and pure until Mr. Right comes along and offers her everything her thoroughly middle-class heart desires. A great deal has been done to rejuvenate the plot with a yokel sophistication—one of her pursuers analyzes her as a Bitch Virgin, incapable of affection or passion, and an "important" scene is placed in a smoky and swinging discotheque—but it's all window-dressing. The three actors who play the pursuers provide some unintentional amusement: Louis Jourdan looks bored and disgusted with the entire production, Richard Crenna gives the impression of suppressed hostility toward everything and everyone, and Chad Everett plays his role as the Chance of a Lifetime. Ann-Margret, the girl who doesn't get made in Paris, is a more subtle matter: she has allowed a succession of films (*The Pleasure-Seekers* and *Bus Riley's Back In Town* are the most recent) to smother her dynamic potential in favor of a calculated attempt to fashion her into a nondescript sex symbol.
—RAYMOND BANACKI

A Patch of Blue is one of those well-meaning, "serious" pictures which invite comic paraphrases of their real point. In this relationship between Sidney Poitier and Elizabeth Hartman—who is blind, Southern, has a whorish mother, and has been raped by a customer—the implicit moral is that affection between a Negro man and a white girl is all right so long as the girl is blind, ignorant, undeveloped, and 18 years old. We will have got somewhere when she's a bright 25-year-old sexpot who knows what she's doing. Meanwhile, the film's solemn "adventurousness" in showing an interracial kiss is only tepid tokenism, and Hartman's sensitivity and Poitier's cool urbanity go to waste.—E. C.

Queen of Blood. After credits over alien art by John Cline: "The year, 1990. . . ." Writer-director Curtis Harrington has set an ill-conceived but unsettling Decadent horror (Florence Marly) in space, but he has had difficulty—and wasted time—in getting John Saxon and other victims out there to meet her, on Phobos. His story does not properly begin until his ill-informed script is half over and they have met her and, back on the Earth's moon, Basil Rathbone can safely say, "Things are going very badly on that ship, very badly indeed." The first half only rockets about, full of coincidence, only-possible-explanation and slightest-miscalculation. The Pathé-color is uneven in space, and while some of the models and special effects are remarkable, some are not and some are unspeakable. But the acting is good, and Harrington concocts terror with uncommon taste and deliberation—long reaction, little shock. With a sound script, this would have worked beautifully; even here, it creates moments that can persuade you.

The Silencers. Another notorious agent (Dean Martin), the worst so far. It looks like something blue, if fancy, that was rented out too often and lost its normal action. "Are you ready for Miss Hendricks?" It's Stella Stevens. She only rolls around in a mud-hole. "So *you*'re 'Cowboy'!" It's Daliah Lavi. She sends Miss Stevens to the Blue Room. "I am a silencer," sings Cyd Charisse. She is silenced. And there are other "Slaymates." The

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April	LORD OF THE FLIES (Great Britain, 1963)
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	RATTLE OF A SIMPLE MAN (Great Britain, 1964)
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FLIEGENDE KLASSENZIMMER — Erich Kastner novel

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