



# **The daily cardinal. Vol. LXXXII, No. 8**

## **September 20, 1971**

Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, [s.d.]

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# Film as a stepchild discipline

Caught on the bandwagon of newness, film on the college campus is shuttled into a bureaucratic system which is unsympathetic to it as an art form and as a medium of communication. It is torn between those people who perceive film study as a fad to be exploited and those who honestly respect the current student interest in the examination of films. It revels in spontaneity but suffers from confinement. This seems to be the state of film scholarship and education at the University.

Students interested in motion pictures are fortunate to be in Madison. The Wisconsin Center for Theater Research is an important archive for research in American film, and the number and variety of film societies on campus merits the envy of visitors. Wisconsin is joined by only 218 other schools in offering cinema courses and is further distinguished by being one of ten which provide a Doctor of Philosophy in film, one of 27 to offer a Master of Arts, and one of 30 which allow a student to get a Bachelor of Arts in film.

However, these figures can be misleading. Film is allied directly with Radio-Television and indirectly with Theatre and Drama and Communication and Public Address in the Communication Arts Department. Because of this alliance, a major in film from Wisconsin has its limitations...

A BA in film is actually a BA in Communication Arts with a concentration in Radio-Television-Film. An undergraduate desiring to major in film but not interested in broadcasting must face the task of circumventing the requirements of a Radio-Television-Film major. Gaining permission to be exempt from certain required courses not related to film has become easier in the last few years. However, a joint major of dance and film or art and film necessitates a certain amount of doorknocking, letterwriting, and other such bureaucratic nonsense. Graduate students preparing for preliminary examinations generally cannot find three people to compose questions on film alone. They cannot avoid writing three or four hours in general media, broadcasting, theater, or rhetoric.

CINEMA HAS NOT YET ACHIEVED the status of an autonomous discipline in the American university system. Rather it is a stepchild adopted by other disciplines. Only seven of 219 departments which offer film courses are separate cinema or photography and cinema departments. Film is generally included in departments of speech, theater, radio-television, mass communications, English, or education. Film subsumes rhetoric, dramatic performance, mass media, certain forms of literature, and artistic style and composition, but to associate it with another medium or mode of analysis in a tightly organized system is to limit the growth of its study as a unique medium.

The alliance of film with radio-television at Wisconsin reflects this stepchild status and also reveals the weaknesses of the university structure. This structure, once based on the separation of hard sciences, social sciences, and humanities into distinct categories of subject matter and methodology, now must accommodate the marriage of film study with broadcasting, a field which is increasingly developing a social science orientation.

It must also adjust to the increased demand for interdepartmental studies and majors. Such a structure itself is questionable; however, the existence of this organization must be at the base of an evaluation of film study at Wisconsin in 1971.

It must also adjust to the increased demand for in-department with a curriculum which is both diverse and flexible. The development of this autonomy will undoubtedly attend a further breakdown in the current university structure. Then perhaps students will be free to create their own majors and fields of specialization. Some might decide to major in radio-television-film, but it would be a personal decision—not one imposed on them by the system.

A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WERE asked to express their opinions of the film curriculum. There was no real consensus save that all agreed there are not enough film courses. The basic reason for the scarcity of courses is money. The three divisions of Communications Arts must divide the department's funds. Budgetary matters limit the number of film professors and teaching assistants, the availability of production equipment, projection equipment, and films for class use.

Communication Arts should be congratulated because its instructors do carry a full teaching load—generally nine credit hours a semester. Time and other duties understandably limit the number of independent studies the film teachers can supervise.

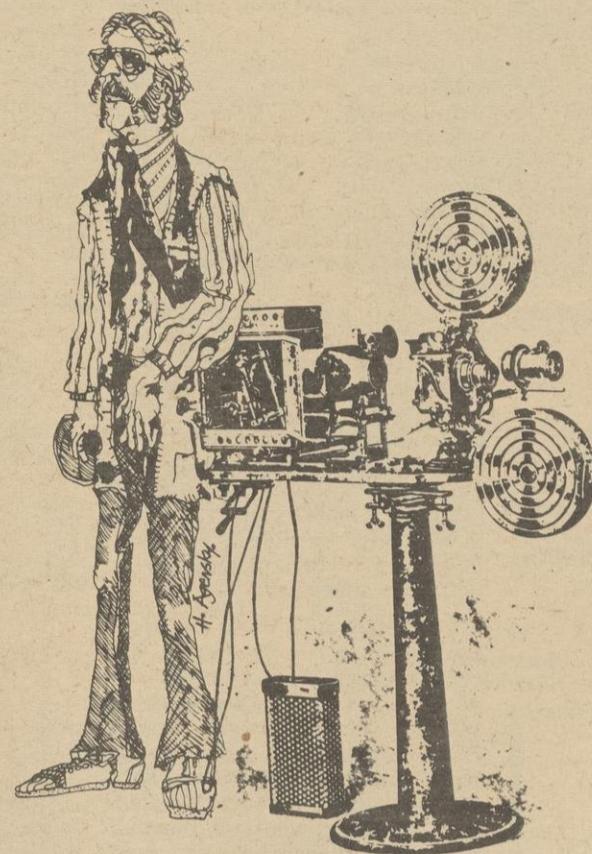
This semester's course offerings illustrate the need for more courses, more people to teach them, and more equipment. There are six film courses being taught. Four of them are limited to a small group of people. The two production courses (356 and 656) had an average enrollment of 15 each at the time of registration. To get in the course students had to fill out a two page application or obtain the permission of the instructor. Critical Film Analysis is limited to those with senior standing who have the consent of the instructor. Admission to the two seminars required the prospective student to submit an old paper for evaluation by the professor. Introduction to Film (350) could not accommodate all the students desiring to register for it. Film and Broadcast Documentary (358) is invariably open to all students, except for freshmen. In other semesters, admission to the screen writing courses has depended on student status and need. History of Film (352) enrollment has been tight, and Film Genres (354) has remained open.

THE DIFFICULTY OF GETTING in a film course is not one experienced by freshmen because they technically cannot register for one. There was a time when Introduction to Film was numbered 150, and freshmen could take the course. Last year it was granted a higher number—350, and enrollment is now limited to those who are at least sophomores.

spent with the media. Prof. Russell Merritt has confirmed this position in the past by altering "to have great poets, you must have great audiences," to read, "to have great films, you must have great audiences."

One way to create a great audience is, of course, to make it aware of the production aspects of the medium. The general curriculum and specific courses reflect an awareness of the need to teach the creative activities which precede the projection of the completed film.

Some students at Wisconsin would disagree with the film professor at another Midwestern university who said: "In form as well as in content, film seems to have absorbed and therefore to reflect many of the most crucial aspects of what we call modern culture, so that one is led toward the dynamics of interaction between an extraordinarily lively art and its society...So much is yet to be known about film it would seem both willful and wasteful to ignore the many established disciplines that bear upon it. One may shudder at the danger of film being studied as an extension of literature, or as painting in motion, or as a reproduction of theatre. But such a rich medium offers more than enough to go around. As long as it is taught with affection and respect, almost any approach can increase understanding and appreciation."



The only course in Radio-Television-Film a freshman can take is Survey of Radio-Television-Film as Mass Media (250).

Have these students been excluded from film courses because its stepchild status has limited the expansion of film throughout the entire university curriculum or because film is treated as a medium which can only be understood after the student has weathered a battery of history and literature courses?

The paucity of film courses inhibits diversity in course content. Film students at other schools have complained that a limited curriculum means they have to accept the "gospel according to" whatever professor or professors hold dominion over the department. The descriptive words may be harsh, but the same conditions prevail here. An auteurist critic will undoubtedly feel uncomfortable in certain classes, while a person given to the use of film as a cultural barometer or historical artifact may enjoy an exalted student status. Certain genres, directors, film movements are in. Others are not. A form of elitism is latent in any small unit of a large institution. It is manifested in the omission of subjects which interest certain students but do not sufficiently intrigue the professors.

LIMITED ENROLLMENTS and too few classes can also breed favoritism. It has been observed that the selection of students for one recurring seminar has resulted in bad feelings. Those denied access believe they are not in the "in group"—that they have little to contribute to the friendly conclave of film aesthetes. This is not necessarily the case. They have been excluded because they do not fit one person's criteria of a good film student.

The most apparent solution to these problems have been alluded to: more professors and teaching assistants, and more equipment. This means film needs more autonomy, influence in the university system, and money. These solutions do not in fact appear to be on the horizon; however, one alternative has been suggested by the Teaching Assistants Association (TAA) and ignored by the University.

The TAA has proposed that each teaching assistant be empowered to grant 60 credit hours each semester in the independent reading courses, 199 or 699. They could then supervise independent studies or organize informal learning collectives. Though this is not the universal panacea, it would certainly allow more students to be actively involved in film study. An informal learning collective could center around certain films shown on campus. The cost to the department would involve the teaching assistants' pay but would exclude expenditures for equipment and films.

ONE COMMON CRITICISM of the film curriculum is that a student desiring to make films finds the courses too sparse and the equipment inadequate. This criticism would be valid if the department pretended it were a film production school. It is not, and professors admit this. In an introductory graduate speech course offered a few years ago, Prof. Chuck Sherman indicated that the Radio-Television-Film curriculum is designed to meet the needs of a liberal arts education. The media are taught in relation to society. Production courses are designed to give the students a grasp of critical tools.

We are prepared for 35 years of leisure time, most of it

THOSE STUDENTS more than "respect and affection" and fear that this "rich medium" may be rendered destitute by an overzealous pie-cutting. They criticize some courses in the department for their literary orientation or resent having to fit films into historical and cultural trends. One local film authority, smarting under an inversion of priorities, has remarked, "We see Birth of a Nation because he really wants us to read The Mind of the South."

Introduction to Film (350) is a compendium of history, technique, aesthetics, and film as a social barometer. Film Genres is likewise a compendium but this time of an actor, writer, director, genre, and theme. These are all different approaches to the examination of films, but a brief survey of different methods, without making it clear that they are models of inquiry and not bodies of information in and of themselves, can be confusing. It would be best if separate courses each comprised an investigation of a director, a genre, a theme, one aspect of film as a social barometer, or aesthetics and theory.

Some film courses at Wisconsin suffer from what one person has described as "diffusions of Arthur Knight"—a few great directors, a few great film movements, an era or two without any sense of the panorama of film history or of the so-called lesser directors, movements, and films.

A person interested in cinema can pursue his subject outside the classroom by simply going to movies and reading. It is doubtful that this would severely handicap him as a scholar, a student, a critic, or a member of the audience. There are a number of people on this campus who display a vast and perceptive knowledge of film without having entered a film class or who did so only after their film interest had developed considerably. Students desiring to obtain credit for their film study or to major in film must register, of course, and they will undoubtedly find the courses exciting, and enjoy learning from, and working with, the able and interesting instructors in Communication Arts, but they may also be slightly confused, occasionally bored, and sometimes miffed at the limitations of the curriculum. They will assuredly feel the stresses of a stepchild discipline.

## cardinal MONDAY magazine

Westward the course of vampire moves its way;  
The concave bosom sinks into eclipse;  
Everywhere happy endings flatter Mae,  
And ape the pace that launched a thousand hips.

Mae West by Ogden Nash

Editor for this issue of the Cardinal Monday Magazine is Russell Campbell, author, critic and editor of The Velvet Light Trap film magazine, now studying for his masters degree in film at the University. Assisting Campbell is the Mayor of Hell Collective (who wrote the lead article on stepchild discipline), M.J. Paggie, and regular members of the Cardinal fine arts staff, including Gerald Peary, Michael Wilmington and Stephen Groark. Cover concept and design by Tim Onosko.

# Conversations with an ex-ghoul...

By GERALD PEARY  
of the Cardinal Staff

John Kirch of Pittsburgh, Pa.: Eighteen years old. Average height, average build—no distinguishing marks. To the unscrupulous, passable without notice on the streets. To the uninitiate, a fairly clean-cut, intense young college student who reads a few too many science fiction books to escape being slightly suspect.

But to those who know, John Kirch is not all that he appears to be. This quasi-All-American lad is in reality a former teenage ghoul, who displayed his dubious and dark persona for the whole world to see in *Night of the Living Dead* . . . the horror film that made Pittsburgh famous.

It was in 1967 that Evans City, Pa., a 2000 population suburb of Pittsburgh, became the unlikely

setting for the filming of the most financially successful horror movie in years. A deserted old farmhouse was rented for the main shooting at \$200 a month, thus keeping the costs consistent within the tiny \$200,000 allocated film budget.

THE NON-PROFESSIONAL cast worked without salary. The technical side of the filming (sound, lighting, photography, etc.) was handled by the management, avoiding the problems of mammoth union pay scales. And when a posse was needed to shoot the ghouls down, scores of off-duty Pittsburgh policemen rushed over to help for free.

*Night of the Living Dead* thus emerged in shooting as a strange combination of rip-off (the management kept the bulk of the money) and a genuine community movie. "The first film shot in Pittsburgh" utilized local people and local facilities, as no invading Hollywood location unit could ever have done.

Not only was the production company an indigenous Pittsburgh unit (Latent Images, Inc. was previously a maker of industrial shorts with such titles as "Ketchup," and "Heinz Pickle No. 1."), but most of the actors as well were native Burghians, including a popular TV monster program host, "Chile Billy Cardille," who was thrown into the picture as a television announcer.

THE FILM LAB work, including the editing and enlarging of the celluloid from 16mm to 35mm for national distribution, was done at WRS, a local television studio. Finally, the world premiere of *Night of the Living Dead* was held at Pittsburgh's Fulton Theater, with everyone who had donated time to the project (from extras on up to the film hierarchy) receiving free tickets in lieu of salary.

For this monumental occasion, *Living Dead* bigwigs donned tuxedos, and afterwards attended a huge reception, featuring caviar and fancy hors d'oeuvres. "Their first film and they went bourgeois," moaned one John Kirch, who attended the event. "Pittsburgh went Hollywood."

Not since a Bill Mazeroski home run won the world series for the Pirates many years ago has the city been quite so excited; its civic pride so captured. Although Latent Images, Inc. received the money (*Living Dead* has profited millions of dollars) the city of Pittsburgh could call itself, at least for awhile, the Eastern American Film Capitol. Still, one must always remember that the same title was once held by a place called Fort Lee, New Jersey.

Meanwhile, back on the set . . . One autumn day in 1967 John Kirby received a phone call. "Do you want to be a ghoul? Come on over." On the other end of the line was

Jack Givens, not only a sound man for *Night of the Living Dead*, but a sometimes ghoul, and a sometimes ghoul recruiter. "Bring some rags," Givens told Kirch, for all actors supplied their own costumes.

THE NEXT morning John Kirch began his two days of work, appearing in disheveled old clothes along with six or eight other ghouls. The make-up was explained and administered by a woman who was one of the film's leads, featured as "the mother." Since she had already been eaten in the movie, she now devoted full-time to make-up.

For those who might be interested in a "ghoul facial": Yellow base, greys and blacks filling in deep shadows for decomposition. Hair is darkened with grease paint, to show that it has lengthened during the ghoul's stay in his coffin. A ghoul hand is built up with morticians wax to affect wounds.

Gasoline was thrown on the ground. When we got close, they would throw a match on it."

One of the ghouls volunteered to let himself be set on fire, a perverse necessity in a movie without Hollywood stuntmen. "As soon as the camera went off, they beat the fire out." In another scene earlier in the film, the ghouls ate raw fish (purchased from the local butcher, no less). Following the volunteer system, the less squeamish ghouls took bites while the camera ran.

BECAUSE JOHN Kirch takes his acting seriously, he found it useful to invent motivation for his ghoul; to supply himself with an acting "sub-text." "I had been burned for two weeks. Any value system I had before was discarded. I didn't give myself a name because my living soul was irrelevant. I had no mind at all. I did things mechanically."

All of this preparation might seem absurd when it is realized that John Kirch's role in *Night of the Living Dead* was minuscule. "I

## The Daily Cardinal

"A Free Student Newspaper"  
FOUNDED APRIL 4, 1892

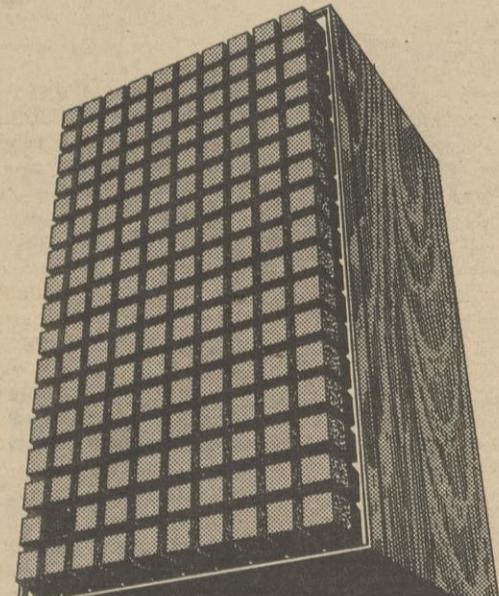
Student newspaper at the University of Wisconsin, owned and controlled by the student body. Published Monday through Saturday mornings during the regular school session; Wed. & Fri. during summer session & Friday-end of summer session by the New Daily Cardinal corporation, 425 Henry Mall, Madison, Wisconsin 53706. Printed at the Journalism School typography laboratory.

Second-class postage paid at Madison, Wis. Please re-cycle.  
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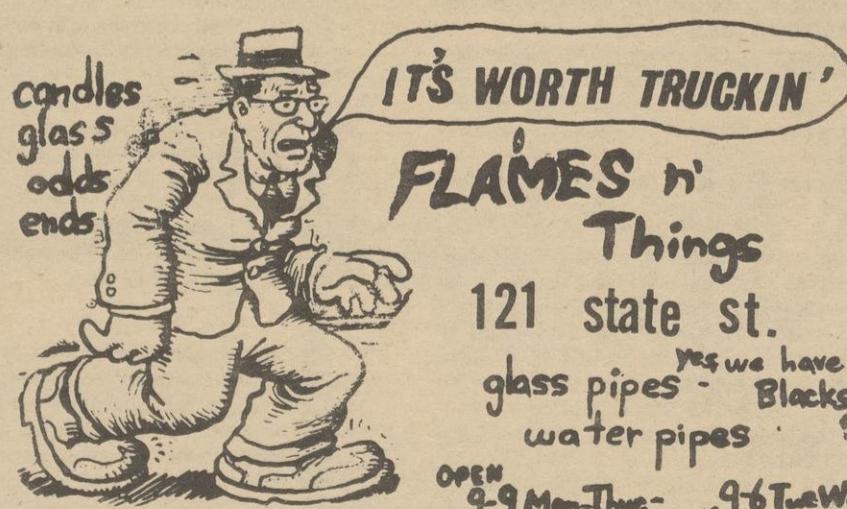
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# Filmmaking in Madison: Something of everything

By M.J. PAGGIE  
of the Fine Arts Staff

The scene is Madison, Wisconsin—a cold, pre-winter Sunday morning, a little after five a.m. It's overcast. The sun's about to rise. State Street is deserted. At the far end, Bascom Hill looks like a painted backdrop. The only movement—the insistent stoplights all flashing together in a thumping rhythm of yellow and red.

From around a corner, a being appears with a black case against his left side, an invaluable three-legged friend in his right arm, and his third "light" eye swinging from a cord around his neck. He's readying to shoot the last scene. The scene where no actors are needed, because no one exists anymore. The filmmaker in Madison.

Why? "It's a good indoor entertainment." "I like the craft. It's fun. There's a lot of pressure. Not steadily, but I sort of enjoy it." "It incorporates all the other arts and disciplines." "I don't know why I like to make films."

One might say that not all people who are making films are "filmmakers," at least not serious filmmakers, but there is truth in the fact that there are more films being made in Madison today than yesterday, by people who've been here awhile and people who are coming here to make them.

Hal Friedman, who has been working in the medium for 21 years, got "too uptight" with New York, so he came to Madison. Steve Naczinski's been filming here for 3 years because there's "no blood thirsty competition like in New York." Madison is a new filmmaker's scene. It isn't big here yet, but it could be, and playing a part in getting things started is an attraction.

"AS YOU PAN action closer to you, it will naturally become larger, thus commanding more of your audience's attention. As you pan action away from you, it grows smaller, and there is an inevitable—if relatively slight—drop in audience interest. Therefore, try to plan your pans so that they reach their climax when the action fills the screen."

There are as many different kinds of films being made here as there are filmmakers.

Alan Moss, a University graduate student in art has turned his eye into the viewfinder as well as more established art forms.

"I'm setting up juxtapositions of photographs in sequence that alters our perceptions of them. Very much what would happen if I were to paint an equivalent number of individual paintings to the number of frames in the film and if one were to view them in very quick sequence perhaps in a motorized wheelchair going down a very long gallery," Moss described.

Friedman likes the small documentary where the filmmaker has a chance "to wear more hats"—a predominant desire of most independent artists.

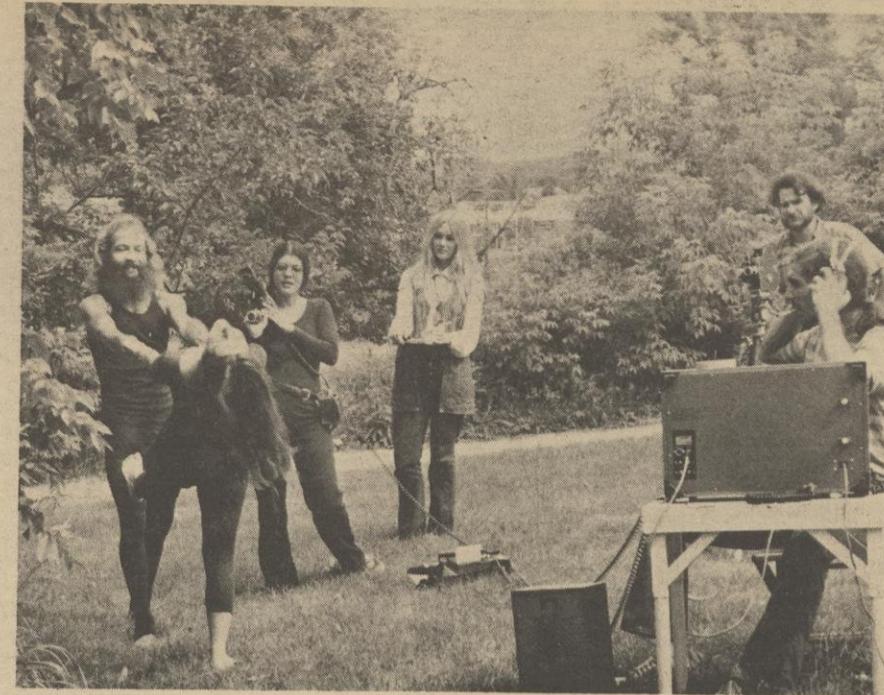
Naczinski enjoys unscripted documentaries and features. Bob White invented a new sync system, "Cine-Slave," which unites visual and sound aspects of film in an aesthetically sensuous experience.

"The Americans were the first to discover the presence of peculiar possibilities in the film play itself. The film not only makes a simple record of the events passing before the lens, but it reproduces them upon the screen by special methods, proper only to itself."

THERE'S MUCH more promise now for the people who want to become involved in film and videotape. The Madison Art Center has been offering instructional classes in beginning Super 8 film production and can offer more facilities and equipment to more students than the University.

The Art Center is also planning the second phase of its film program this fall with the addition of a film study section, exhibition and study of experimental films with extra programs like "Genesis IV."

Friedman and Rick Smith have an instructional workshop centered around 16mm editing with a Moviola and other professional equipment available at considerably low cost. (Interested people should contact Smith at 233-7130.) This is a good opportunity for people to work with equipment that wouldn't be available to them elsewhere in Madison, and also pick-up a lot of information about the filming



INNER SPACE SYSTEMS on location in Madison—testing the "Cine-Slave" sync system.

process as seen from the heart of production-editing.

Naczinski is preparing to start a video production company, Polycom, that will use small format video tape and some film while operating from a mobile van with V.T. editing facilities. They're looking for a production crew and will have part-time jobs available in scripting, announcing, composing, etc. (Contact Naczinski by writing Polycom, Box 1442, Madison 53701.)

Most filmmakers who've been at it awhile will tell you the only way to learn how to film is to do it and the previously mentioned programs seem to be a good step in the right direction. Friedman has studied at a film school in France and says he "learned nothing." Naczinski suggests contacting people who make films and trying to help them. Moss says he picked up what he knows about film "... on street corners like everybody else."

FILM HAS COME from behind its fenced-in studio walls and is appearing in the hands of people everywhere. Moss notes that a passive audience of film viewers is becoming an active group of filmmakers.

He points to the interest today in filmic concepts and the people behind the scenes. Rather than star consciousness, we have director consciousness and an awareness of the elements of photography—lighting, composition, etc.—technical awareness in a

technological society.

There are underground films in which there is no movement, and films in which there is nothing but movement. There are some that have been banned, and there is one that was nominated for an Academy Award. Tripod-like lighting stands are available which will accommodate almost all lighting fixtures.

Polecats are single poles that go from ceiling to floor or from one wall to the opposite wall. You cannot have a good motion picture without pictorial continuity. The fourth reel ends with the firing of a gun, on board the rebel battleship, at the Odessa Theatre. This seemingly simple incident is handled in an extraordinarily simple way by Eisenstein.

Join the filmmaking revolution. The general rule states: When shooting a new scene, change the size of the image, or change the angle, or both. As you pan action closer to you, it will naturally become larger, so change the size of image on street corners and ban an Academy Award. On board the rebel battleship films are made on the conveyor belt or perhaps in a motorized wheelchair going down a very long gallery.

So the filmmaker has shot the last scene. Now he must put it all together and wait for another sunrise.

M.J. Paggie is director of the film program at Madison Art Center.

## An appreciation of Nicholas Ray

Director of "Rebel without a Cause"

By MIKE WILMINGTON  
of the Fine Arts Staff

Nicholas Ray is one of three internationally-known film directors born in Wisconsin; the other two are Orson Welles and Joseph Losey. Ray and Losey attended LaCrosse Central High during the same period (the late twenties). Ray began as a stage actor, directed several Broadway shows, and came to Hollywood as Elia Kazan's first assistant in *At Tree Grows in Brooklyn*.

His first film was *They Live By Night*; his most famous are *Johnny Guitar* and *Rebel Without a Cause*. Like both Welles and Losey, Ray got his initial impetus and support from John Houseman, who produced *They Live by Night*, a low budget, 1948 film based on the career of Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow.

What I have to say about Nicholas Ray will be fragmentary. I have not seen *Johnny Guitar*, which many people feel is his best film—Godard refers to it repeatedly in *Pierrot le Fou*, *La Chinoise* and *Weekend*—and much of what I have seen I have had to catch on television at odd hours of the morning or with bad reception. Despite his European reputation, where his list of devotees includes Godard, Alain Resnais, Francois Truffaut, Roberto Rossellini, and Eric Rohmer, Ray is rarely shown on American campuses (with the single exception of *Rebel Without a Cause*, his most famous film and his own personal favorite.)

Among "respectable" critics, and even some of his American colleagues, he is known as the pet director of irrational cultists, and in Hollywood, where he has not released a film since *55 Days in Peking* in 1963, he is virtually a forgotten man.

Ray's career effectively spans only the fifties. And despite his intense prolificacy during that period, he has been silent for the past eight years; his most recent project, a film of the Chicago Conspiracy Seven Trial featuring the original cast, fell through due to lack of funds and Ray's disinterest.

THE YOUNG GROVE PRESS representative who was squiring Godard around U.S. campuses a year ago was with him when he visited Ray in Chicago; he reported that Ray is considered too "irresponsible" ever to direct another movie, and relies heavily on mescaline and other drugs.

Ray is sixty. The years he missed are usually peak creative years for a film director. During the same period in their lives, Renoir directed *Carros d'Or* and *The River*, Hitchcock did *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*; Chaplin brought us *Monsieur Verdoux*; and Bunuel directed *Los Olvidados* and *Nazarin*. But Ray seems content; besides his experiments with drugs (in the fifties, Ray reputedly had troubles with alcoholism), he is living with a young Underground Press reporter, and working with ups.

ONE MOURNS THE films that Ray has not directed, and the ones which he perhaps never will, yet there is a curious consistency in the fate

which seems to have overtaken him. Of all American directors, he was always the one who was most fervently on the side of youthful rebellion, and the one who most consistently portrayed themes of personal spiritual or moral salvation, frequently in defiance of the opinion of society.

He was our Great Romantic, and the closeness of his work to that of his friend Elia Kazan only accentuates the extent to which Kazan's obsession with compromise and power limited his own romanticism.

Ray is a kind of artist who is unusual in films. He was not a surrealist, but he belonged to that same spiritual vein which produced Vigo and Bunuel. In Ray's case, the surrealist vision was a matter of temperament, buried far below the narrative surface of his films.

REVOLT, FOR RAY, was never direct, as it was for Vigo and the younger Bunuel. It was more subtle less overt, and therefore, perhaps, more insidious. After all, a complacent audience can turn away from *Un Chien Andalou* or *L'Age d'Or* as from a sudden burst of profanity. But *Rebel Without a Cause*, *Bigger than Life*, and *The Savage Innocents*, operate from a deceptive, fluctuating viewpoint which seems to correspond with society's.

Ray was an observer; he usually remained somewhere outside direct rebellion, from his vantage point of realism and romanticism—but the rebellion had all his heart, and he used his art to express both his love for it, and the agony of the inchoate rebel, impelled by instinct, and confused by the forces that are crippling or destroying him. His technique, like Bunuel's, is remarkable for its lucidity, its control, and its transparency. When Ray tries a visual stunt—like turning the camera upside down as Dean's mother descends the staircase toward him in *Rebel* and then righting it as Dean raises his head—it is always based on the clearly comprehensible perspective of one of his characters.

RAY IS NOT a totally subjective director—like Hawks or Antonioni—but his narrative style is usually based on the clash of several subjective viewpoints. A *Rashomon*, in which the subjective is neatly sorted out and separated, would have been impossible for Ray; *The True Story of Jesse James*, in which he approximates Kurosawa's method, is one of his conspicuous failures.

Instead, his approach is remarkable for the way in which he could simultaneously enter into the minds of two characters holding fundamentally opposite viewpoints or attitudes—such as Robert Ryan and John Wayne in *Flying Leathernecks*, Ryan and Ida Lupino in *On Dangerous Ground*, James Dean and Edward Platt in *Rebel Without a Cause*, James Mason and Walter Matthau in *Bigger Than Life*, and Burl Ives and Christopher Plummer in *Wind Across the Everglades*—and while keeping his sympathies perfectly clear, retain the integrity of both characters' opinions.

Villainy in a Ray film almost always springs from some vein of irrationality which the character cannot himself understand or admit to—such as Mercedes McCambridge's sexual hysteria in *Johnny Guitar*, Curt Jurgens' cowardice in *Bitter Victory*, Mason's cortisone-induced paranoia in *Bigger Than Life*, and the adolescent masochism and posturing of Buzz's gang in *Rebel*.

(continued on page 7)



# Confessions of a Cultist

CONFESSONS OF A CULTIST  
By Andrew Sarris  
Simon and Schuster: \$8.95;  
paper, \$3.95

By RUSSELL CAMPBELL.

"Cultists and buffs in other areas," says Andrew Sarris in his foreword to *Confessions of a Cultist*, "are generally described as scholars and specialists, but interdisciplinary intolerance seems to be the eternal reaction of the old against the new."

It's no coincidence that Sarris's name is generally spoken with scorn at university film departments around the country (including the University), especially since his elevation to associate professor at Columbia with only a bachelor's degree. Sarris's sin has always been to take American cinema seriously, to speak of Hawks in the same breath as Renoir and Dreyer.

MOST MAJOR CRITICS in the United States, which is to say the incumbents at the prestigious national journals, have had difficulty reconciling the self-evident commercialism of Hollywood movies with literary preconceptions of the nature of art. They still do, and so do most academics: hence film study and criticism becomes a schizophrenic dialectic between European films, reverently treated as works of art, and American films, ignominiously relegated to the murky depths of the "mass media."

Which is not to say that in opposing this division, Sarris has been startlingly original. In essence, his writing from the early sixties on has merely consolidated what French and (more recently) British critics had been saying for years.

Nevertheless, his 1963 *Film Culture* article, later expanded into his book *The American Cinema*, provided the first comprehensive framework for a critical history of the American sound cinema.

Sarris adopted the auteurist approach of treating films as the personal expression of their director, and confronted the problem of critical value head on by placing directors in categories in descending order of merit. (That the titles of some of these categories were whimsical—"The Far Side of Paradise," "Expressive Esoterica"—further alienated the solemn-faced sociologically-oriented academics in the burgeoning discipline of film scholarship.)

Sarris's other achievement in *The American Cinema* was to make "social consciousness" a dirty term. For Sarris, a problem theme is worth far less than a stylistic nuance, and this bias was a healthy piece of corrosive in the established critical climate of the Sixties.

CONFESSONS OF A CULTIST is a collection of his reviews and other short pieces, from 1955 to 1969, from *Film Culture* to *The New York Times* with the heaviest sampling out of his regular paper, *The Village Voice*. The book seems, by contrast with *The American Cinema*, deliberately non-controversial. It is his comments on the big films which, by and large, Sarris has chosen to preserve (from 1963 to 1969, the book prints an average of 17 columns per year).

What is more, the reviews are surprisingly free of the enfant terrible guerrilla attacks on established citadels for which he has become famous (the publishers gleefully pick out the few there are and print them on the back jacket, like "Bergman has turned out twenty-seven feature films without even beginning to suggest an instinctive affinity to the medium."

Despite the title, this is no parade of cranky cultist excesses; Sarris pays as much attention to foreign movies as he does to American, and even an auteurist cause celebre like Hitchcock's *Marnie* gets short shrift.

*Confessions of a Cultist* provides the possibility of

studying the manner in which Sarris's antagonism to the social problem picture has developed. As early as 1957 we find him putting down *A Face in the Crowd* for being "liberal propaganda."

THEN, IN THE STANLEY KRAMER era, it seemed Sarris was reacting against social consciousness because the movies it gave rise to were overpraised and bad. But with the reviews of the sixties something of a narrowminded prejudice is revealed (what of the "honestly pluralistic criticism" you speak of, Mr. Sarris?). Sarris refuses to accept the idea of political cinema at all: he is just not interested.

"If I must choose between beautiful people and ugly problems, I will choose the beautiful people and leave the problems to the politicians."

"If I prefer *Pierrot le Fou* to, say, *Weekend*, it is because I find the end of an affair an infinitely more interesting subject than the beginning of a revolution." "Infinitely," note. It follows that Sarris begins to sound reactionary as the Sixties wear on and more and more films become preoccupied with the problems of radical politics.

The suspicion that there is something deficient in Sarris's world-view becomes more insistent when we encounter comments like this one on *Frantz's Judex*: "Nothing great, mind you, but not to be missed by retarded types (like this reviewer) who have never quite got over the feeling that pretty ladies in tights contain all the secrets of the universe."

IT SHOULDN'T BE OVERLOOKED that Sarris was already 27 by the time he started writing for *Film Culture*, and he's now in his forties. When he starts pontificating, as so many of our elders like to do, about us kids, he's at his feeblest.

Take his "Generation Gap" piece (1968): "What is frightening about today's youth is not so much its skepticism as its complete lack of historical curiosity." Or his reaction to *A Hard Day's Night*, when Sarris sounds particularly fuddy-duddy: "So help me, I resisted the Beatles as long as I could... I kept looking for openings to put down the Beatles," but finally, succumbing, "I must say I enjoyed the music enormously."

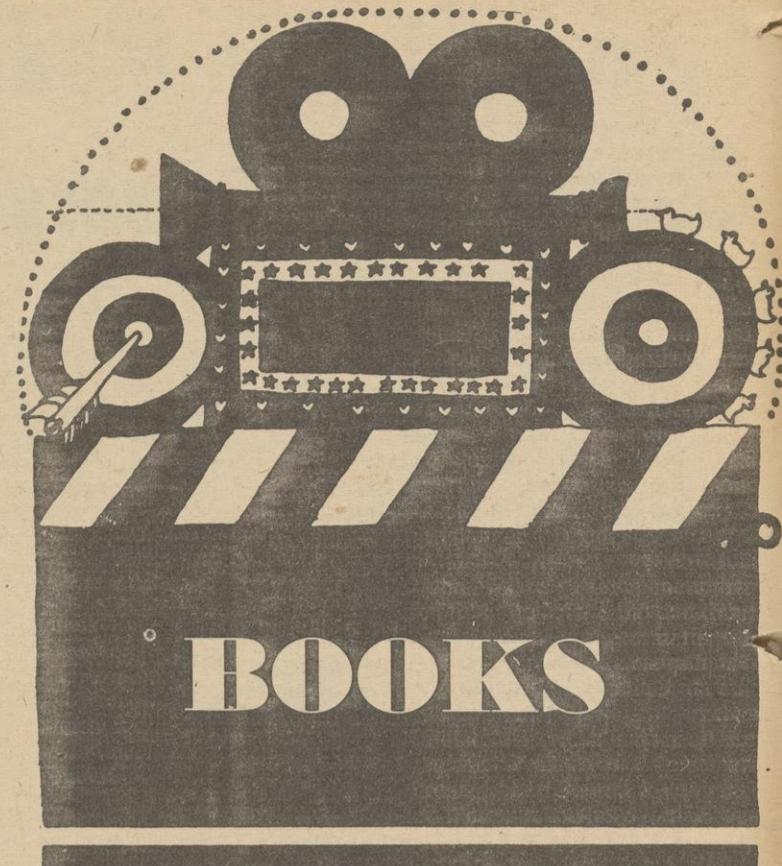
Sarris is also less adept at applying the auteur theory than one would hope and expect. The maddening thing about *The American Cinema* was the brevity of comments on individual films, but even within the scope of full reviews Sarris very seldom relates a film to earlier work by the same director except in the most perfunctory fashion. The review of Ford's *Seven Women* is one of the weakest pieces in the book, full of phrases like "a genuinely great film," "pure classicism of expression," "too profound for the art-film circuit," "the materials of one of the cinema's greatest poets," without beginning to justify them.

Sarris's own style has evolved over the years to become more mannered as it has become more conscious. He now succumbs readily to the lure of alliteration and assonance, an indulgence of questionable value.

The review of *Easy Rider*, for instance, abounds in phrases like "motorcycles, materialism, misanthropy and murder," "rousingly rhythmic revelry," "allegedly affecting figures of alienation," "fecund farmer," "hirsute hitchhiker," "the level of lethargic lyricism." His bad puns encompass such atrocities as "a paity, poultrylike thing" and Barbra Streisand as "ham on wry."

BUT SARRIS SHOULD BE read. His best writing is simple and lucid, betraying so much love and respect for its subject matter that there is no chance for the author to tie himself up in knots for stylistic effect.

Russell Campbell, author, critic and editor of *Velvet Light Trap*, is writing his masters thesis on films while studying at the University.



NEGATIVE SPACE by Manny Farber

Praeger: \$7.95

By GERALD PEARY

The name of Manny Farber is a legendary one in the field of film criticism, meaning that everyone who reads about the movies has encountered it in passing, but few are familiar with much of his work. Indeed most of Farber's reputation rests with the popularity of a single brilliant, bizarre, and utterly original 1957 essay, "The Underground Film," which frequently has been anthologized with considerable influence on the path of subsequent American film criticism.

But besides this one essay, Farber's works remained hidden until now in their original places of publication, back issues of half a dozen non-film magazines from *The Nation* to *Cavalier*, where few film fans venture. A genuine assessment of Manny Farber's contributions to film criticism seemed unattainable.

YET SUDDENLY, AS PART of the huge flow of recent film books, comes the unexpected event, the publication of *Negative Space*, an important sampling of Farber's film writing beginning with 1943. Although the essays here constitute only a small percentage of Farber's total output of film writing, there is enough in *Negative Space* to convince us readily that Farber's coterie reputation is well deserved. Farber's distinguished book immediately qualifies to rank with James Agee's *On Film*, Pauline Kael's *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, and the recently released Andrew Sarris book, *Confessions of a Cultist* among the most provocative volumes of film essays by a single author ever published.

Who is Manny Farber? He was the film critic for *The New Republic* from 1942 to 1946, for *The New Leader* in 1949, for *The Nation* from 1950 to 1952. Then comes a major gap. Except for occasional articles in esoteric film journals, Farber's next regular place of writing employment was at *Cavalier* magazine between 1964-1966. (Analogous to the stint of Andrew Sarris as movie reviewer of another "girlie" magazine, *Rogue*, in the early 1960's.) Since 1966 Manny Farber has served as the regular critic for *Artforum*.

More important, Manny Farber is the poet laureate of the Hollywood "B" movie, the staunchest, most articulate defender of the low-class American film, which Farber calls by his coined term of "termite art." He is the haunter of derelict movie theatres, the 42nd Streets of every city, in search of the honest movie: unpretentious, tight, logical, and "masculine." He is the espouser of mad causes, whose weird film preferences make perfect sense ten years after he has stated them.

Farber is a painter turned film critic who, alone among film

critics prior to just listening to aware of visual aesthetician, who Finally, Farber's from man including those critics to please

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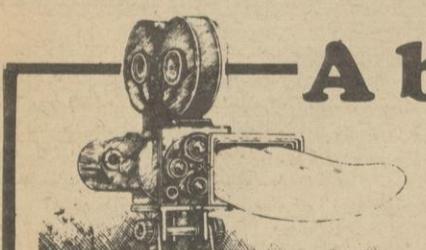
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# Leonard Maltin:

By RUSSELL CAMPBELL  
of the Cardinal Staff

There are film freaks in Madison but none, it is safe to say, is quite so freaky as a cherubic New Yorker named Leonard Maltin. Maltin edited the paperback *TV Movies*, which is the one that respects your intelligence by listing the director along with the cast.

He has published another paperback, *Movie Comedy Teams*, which covers them all in scholarly detail from Laurel & Hardy through to Rowan & Martin, and has two more books due out before the year's end, a survey of short subjects and an interview study of Hollywood cameramen.

MALTIN, WHO HAS also edited *Film Fan Monthly* since May 1966, is a senior in journalism at NYU and 20 years old.

Maltin was spotted by The Daily Cardinal perusing Vitaphone shorts at the State Historical Society one day early in Sep-

tember. Asked about this recondite research, he replied, "This is sort of a life's project. I can't pinpoint when I got hooked on short subjects but I suppose it was from watching *Our Gang* and *Laurel & Hardy* and *The Three Stooges* on TV as a kid."

His great pleasure in a breezing visit to Madison (before attending a Classic Film Collectors conference in Milwaukee) was in viewing some of the 64 entries in what has now become "just about my favorite short subject series": Joe McDoakes, made between 1943 and 1955 at Warners and "shamefully neglected."

"They're fantastically clever," said Maltin, "very, very ingenious." Warners released the series to TV last year with a one-sheet sales synopsis. Nobody bought it.

"BUT WHY SHOULD anybody buy it?" Maltin asked, "They don't know what it is. It seems a shame they couldn't get behind something

like that and try to really promote it."

Maltin's ire at distributors has been raised during countless frustrated attempts to look at their films, see stills from them, or merely to obtain information about them. A recent issue of *Film Fan Monthly* contains an extended piece on this subject.

"OK, so the film companies are in business to make money," said Maltin. "I mean no-one's going to argue that, but it's when they are capriciously selfish with their films and film materials to no good end that I get annoyed. They sit on films and let them rot."

It's particularly bad with short subjects, and MGM, according to Maltin, is the worst. "They're not going to rent them, they're not going to make them available, they don't care, they can't be bothered. That type of attitude really drives me up the wall."

MALTIN ALSO HAS strong

# 'none quite so freaky'

feelings about how film should be taught. He took an introductory silent film course that was "dry and lifeless." He doesn't think it should be that way. "You can't impart enthusiasm in films, especially silent films, unless you present them correctly. You can't look at old movies in a vacuum. You have to know something about the era as a whole and something about the contemporary films being made. But if you're going to show a film without saying anything and then have everyone laughing because somebody says, 'Give me a nickel for a phone call' or uses some slang expression of the day, you're pretty much lost before you start. And so the kids come out of class saying 'Aargh, we saw some corny silent movie' and nothing's taken place, it's been a big waste."

This warmed Maltin up to another touchy topic, auteurist film critics. "There's nothing wrong with being especially interested in directors if you're a director freak, that's great, but to be a director freak to the exclusion of everyone else involved in making the film is silly. It bugs me. These guys who say, 'Oh, De Toth, Jesus! Did you see what De Toth did in *Ramrod*? And you'll say, 'It was a nice performance there by Joel McCrea, wasn't it?' And

"I hope the magazine is fun. That's one of our prime interests, making it entertaining. We're serious about some of the frivolous things of Hollywood. We're looked down upon by a lot of people who

(continued on page 7)

## Negative Space

critics prior to 1960, seemed to really watch movies instead of just listening to their screenplays being recited, who was keenly aware of visual style. He is not only a critic but a film theorist-aesthetician, whose theories derive loosely from his paintings. Finally, Farber is a genuine film lover who, surprisingly different from many critics, feels passionately about the movies, including those he hates. He is probably the toughest of all critics to please.

FARBER'S UNQUALIFIED LOVES are few and they easily can be run through. In 1943 he dedicated his critical energies to building a brilliant case for Warner Brothers' *Merrie Melodies* cartoons, expertly distinguishing among the styles of three animators: "surrealist" Tex Avery, "show-biz satirist" Bob McKimson, and "comic character" specialist Chuck Jones (later of *Road Runner* fame).

In the following years Farber expanded his critical taste to include a series of tough-guy Hollywood directors (Howard Hawks, William Wellman, William Keighley) who made slick, hard, but unpretentious gangster and adventure movies beginning in the 1930's. This bunch was labelled by Farber "the most interesting group to appear in American culture since the various groupings made the 1920's the explosive era."

In the 1950's Farber added Don Siegel, Anthony Mann, and Sam Fuller, and comparatively obscure directors of slimey and violent low-budget films, to his list of approved talents. Finally, in the 1960's, normally American chauvinist Farber looked to Europe and embraced the Bergman of *Persona* (but not of *Hour of the Wolf*, "a bomb") and the Godard of *La Chinoise* and other epics which featured the architectural camerawork of Raoul Coutard.

Farber's last cause in Negative Space is Canadian underground filmmaker Michael Snow, whose work Farber adores without reservation. He calls Snow's *Wavelength*, "The Birth of a Nation of underground films."

BUT OUTSIDE OF FARBER'S circle of favorites lie the great bulk of filmmakers today. And in describing his dislikes, "the water buffalos of film art," Manny Farber is his most exciting, for he is one of those critics who seems most joyously inspired when writing negative comments. Furthermore his juiciest phrases all are reserved time and again for stabs at the most hallowed, sacred of all films and film personages.

Revered populist film director Frank Capra is "strictly a mechanic" who "characteristically doublecrosses his social criticism." John Huston is "a smooth blend of iconoclast and sheep." *The Quiet Man*, the most popular film of John Ford with both audiences and critics is "a bit worse than that potboiler

"When Willie Comes Marching Home" (normally considered Ford's most feeble work).

Establishment critics' favorite film of the 1940's, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, is "a horse-drawn truckload of liberal schmaltz." And the worshipped cultist film, *Lola Montes* (Andrew Sarris' favorite film) is "nothing but crazy make-up, improbability, and graceless acting." Other unfortunate acting is to be found in the modern French-Italian movies featuring Jeanne Moreau ("Jeanne Morose") and Monica Vitti ("Monica Univita").

What kind of film does Manny Farber desire? He wants movies which deal with characterization first instead of theme, feeling that many movies are "dehumanized by a compulsion to grind out a message." He wants a genuine nonconformity in filmmaking (as with the crime movies of Sam Fuller), not fashionable liberal nonconformity, such as Lumet's *Twelve Angry Men*, which Farber lumps together in artlessness with Larry Rivers' paintings and Dave Brubeck records.

FARBER DEMANDS a return to the kind of exemplary film acting found in the best talents of the 1930's, the *Lee Tracy's*, the *Bette Davis's*. He characterizes this style as "an uninterrupted perusal of character . . . acted with mannerisms so rhythmically and harmoniously related that the effect was of a highly attenuated ballet." Farber objects to both 1950's "method" acting ("acting in bits . . . garish touches of character and meaning") and "the self-conscious languor" of the modern European actor ever since Antonioni created the *Flat Man*, "a two-dimensional—no past and no future."

Finally Farber wants audiences to stop seeking out the pictures with the big messages (usually the worst, most overblown movies of even the best of directors). Rather they should look to what usually is considered the most unlikely place to find art: the action picture at the bottom of the double bill.

Manny Farber is for "termite-fungus-centipede art," a crazy but ultimately meaningful term for the artistic "B" movie. Says Farber, "These are the only films that show the director testing himself as an intelligence against what appears on the screen."

His ideal director burrows into his pulp material and transforms it miraculously into a work of genuine ambience and atmosphere, in which the style of the picture is synonymous with its message. This is the essence of what constitutes Manny Farber's beloved Underground Film, a term which will be filled with meaning for those lucky enough to read Negative Space.

Gerald Peary, fine arts editor of the Daily Cardinal, is working on his Ph.D. thesis on gangster films while studying at the University.

"Pauline Kael is better than movies," announces a blurb on the latest collection of essays by one of our best known film critics.

This book contains her reviews from 1968 and early 1969 for *The New Yorker*, plus a 50-page essay which appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*. That she is better than movies is dubious, although she is undoubtedly a much better writer than most film critics.

HER POINT OF VIEW is casually laid out in the rambling "Trash, Art and the Movies," the long central essay. Although she never defines her terms very clearly, most American movies appear to be trash. Now there is nothing wrong with that, as long as it is "good trash"; that is, as long as there are no pretensions to art. Good trash is exemplified by the American films of Josef von Sternberg, *Morocco* and *Shanghai Express*—as long as we understand them as "mindless adventures."

When overzealous critics like Andrew Sarris try to find anything behind their "absurd trashy style," they are only elevating these movies to the level of "bad trash." Bad trash is exemplified by such American films as, you guessed it, *2001* and *Petulia*, which become clumsy and pretentious in their striving for meaning.

The strange result of this basic attitude is that she judges trash movies much more rigorously than art movies. If Hollywood's chief contribution is craftsmanship and technical fluency, then all movies had better have it.

ON THE OTHER HAND, art directors not only are allowed to be sloppy, but sloppiness is allowed as part of their art. About Luis Bunuel, she says, "His indifference to whether we understand him or not can seem insolent, and yet this is part of what makes him fascinating. Indifference can be tantalizing in art . . ."

Or about Godard's *Weekend*: "The most hideously flawed of all Godard's movies, it has more depth than anything he's done before. Although by the end his conscious meanings and attitudes are not at all clear, the vision that rises in the course of the film is so surreally powerful that one accepts it, as one accepts a lunar landscape by Bosch or a torment by Grunewald."

But within Kael's framework, her perceptions are often accurate. Her essay on *If . . .*, which she contrasts with Vigo's classic *Zero de Conduite*, makes it clear why the earlier movie is so much better.

SHE IS NOT ALWAYS overawed by art, as she describes "the demented, suffering painter-hero of *Hour of the Wolf* smearing his lipstick in a facsimile of expressionist anguish."

But best of all perhaps, are her reviews of movies never seen by this reviewer for her witty comments can be enjoyed without worrying about whether she is better or worse than the movie she is talking about.

Stephen Groark, formerly a teaching assistant at the University, presently is unemployed.

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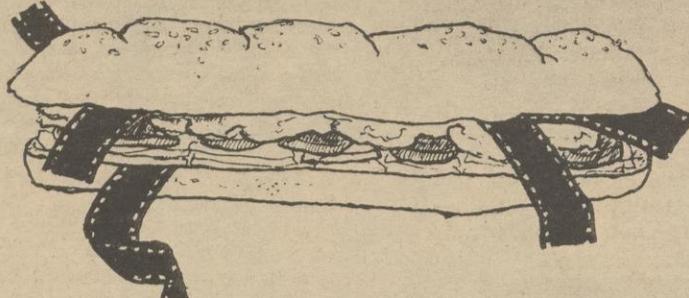
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## Their Favorite movie...and why



Gerald Nichol, district attorney: "I liked *Patton* for its excellent acting, superb photography and historical accuracy. You could interpret the movie in any way you wanted, either calling it either super patriotic or an example of the reason all wars should be ended."

Ralph Hanson, director of University Protection and Security: I can remember three films that I enjoyed very much: *Gone With the Wind*, *Duel in the Sun*, and *Oklahoma*. I read the books of the first two and thought the film adaptation, acting and scenes were superb. *Oklahoma*'s musical score and acting made it a film that I went to see more than once.

Patrick Lucey, governor of Wisconsin: *Z* is the governor's favorite film, press secretary Blake Kellogg told us.

Roberta Weaver, wife of the University president: "We haven't seen a movie since *Patton* and although we enjoy legitimate theater and film we haven't had much chance to see anything lately."

University: *Coconuts*, a 1929 Marx Brothers film is his favorite, the president's secretary reported.

Gordon Roseleip, state senator (R—Darlington): "Patton was my favorite. It portrayed the life of a great American. The acting was outstanding."

Susan Kay Phillips, ninth ward alderman: "I haven't seen a movie

in six months but the best one I can remember is *Z* for pointing out the corruption and politicking that go on in government.

Paul Soglin, eighth ward alderman: "I've seen few films this year. The best one I can think of is *Cartouche*. It is a very funny film which left me with a good feeling."

Miles McMillen, editor of the *Capital Times*: "I guess I'd have to say *Midnight Cowboy* was my favorite film because of Dustin Hoffman's fine performance. He should have gotten an Academy Award for it. As I think back on some of the old greats like *Casablanca* I have to admit that movies today are better than in the past. Techniques are better and films are more realistic."

Chandler Young, vice-chancellor of the University: "I rarely have time to go to movies, but of the few that I've seen in the past few years I enjoyed *The Graduate* the most. It made some good fun of my generation and after working with young people for as long as I have I could sympathize with what the graduate was going through."

William Dyke, mayor of Madison: After pondering the John Wayne films he has seen, trying to decide which one he could call his favorite movie of all time, the major finally gave up and named *Algiers*, a 1938 release, his favorite. (Information received via his secretary).

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# Nicholas Ray

(continued from page 3)

Ray was always prepared to extend sympathy to any character even while condemning his attitudes, and the heroes of his films are the characters who realize and comprehend themselves.

HIS DRAMATIC conflicts usually pit characters of a higher or lower degree of fealty to society (and a higher and lower degree of obedience to instinct). The "savage innocents" of the film of the same name—the primitive eskimos with their passive, natural acceptance of brutality, death, sexual infidelity, and hardship—are not presented as a

of one's condition.

Of course this is purely personal salvation, yet Ray's handling of social forces never degenerates into paranoia, and if paranoia or social disengagement ever enters into the psychic makeup of his characters, he is quick to reveal it, and to measure its dangers against the character's potential for good or growth.

Most of Ray's heroes are outlaws but, somewhat like the "noble outlaws" of John Ford, they are simultaneously driven by an overriding passion for family—either their own, or a surrogate family—and this passion leads them, indirectly, toward the

seen, the ones which I like best are *Rebel Without a Cause*, *Bigger Than Life*, and *The Savage Innocents*; I also strongly admire *In a Lonely Place*, for Bogart's performance and *Bitter Victory* and *Wind Across the Everglades*.

*Rebel Without a Cause* still seems to me the best depiction of American adolescence, at least as I understood and experienced it—not so much because of its verisimilitude as its sympathetic and poetic magnification of the interior life. It is because Ray's approach in this film is not tied down to the social—as juvenile delinquent or "youth problem" films usually are—that its effect is so lasting. The kids of *Rebel* are not social victims, but victims of deficiencies within themselves and their families.

THE PROBLEMS and conflicts would be identical in any social strata or under any political system.

A sense of eternity pervades the film; the spurts of violence seem illusory, feverish. The celebrated "chicken run" is played not so much for conventional suspense as for dramatic inevitability; only in the last overhead shot of the waves pounding against the cliff over which Buzz's car has plunged do we sense the real direction of the scene, and of the characters' lives. (Ray's original title—*The Blind Run* exemplifies this tragic overview.) And the magnificent scene in the planetarium, with the universe exploding over the heads of the unruly, gum-chewing crowd—passive, nihilistic, treating these intimations of death as only another spectacle and pastime—is a stunning metaphor for the thoughtless nihilism of a society's underground.

THE BEAUTY of Ray's films lies in their sensual, moody flow, their sensitivity to all the emotional nuances of a conflict, and their passionate movement toward self-fulfillment. As Henry Miller said of Kazans *The Arrangement*: "When you touch (them), you touch a man."

Today, in the silence in which he exists one hopes that Ray will be recognized and appreciated by the "happy few,"—those whose anguish he perceived and whose causes he defended.

ideal of community and a harmonious existence with others.

THE DIFFERENCE between Ray and Ford lies in the degree to which Ray inhabits these outlaws, and to his sense of contrast in presenting them. When directing James Cagney, for instance, Ray remarked that he wanted to bring out Cagney's "serenity;" it is always this spot of calm, at the center of the most violent personalities—Dean, Bogart, Ryan, Quinn—which he is most successful in developing.

Of all Ray's films that I have



REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE

personal ideal but as a spiritual one; their ethos has come about as an adjustment to their environment. Within the limitations of that environment, they fully understand themselves, as the white preacher whom Inuk kills, for example, does not. We cannot be like Inuk (Anthony Quinn, whom Bob Dylan was later to immortalize as "Quinn the Eskimo," yet Inuk represents, for himself a correct and balanced channelling of instincts, and it is toward this ideal that Ray's characters strive, the acceptance

ideal of community and a harmonious existence with others.

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Of all Ray's films that I have

## Maltin

(continued from page 5)

find us a little too frivolous, and too esoteric. And they all get a good charge out of the fact that we carry articles about obscure actresses. But there's nothing really wrong with that. They've got their bag and we've got ours."

And Maltin's bag is certainly not the publicity gossip the title of the magazine might suggest to the uninitiated. Maltin is serious, and his seriousness is revealingly summed up in his thoughts about the current American cinema.

"I THINK Don Siegel is just about the last ray of hope for Hollywood movie-making. And at Universal, of all studios... Universal turns out more garbage—they can't even tell a TV show from a movie any more, they look alike. They're not great films, I don't think, it's just that they're really good films, well-made, compact, well thought out, nicely shot, intelligent. And there is so little of that craftsmanship in Hollywood today that they stand out..."

Leonard Maltin, who knows more about American movies than virtually everybody who saw them when they first appeared, is in a good position to judge.

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