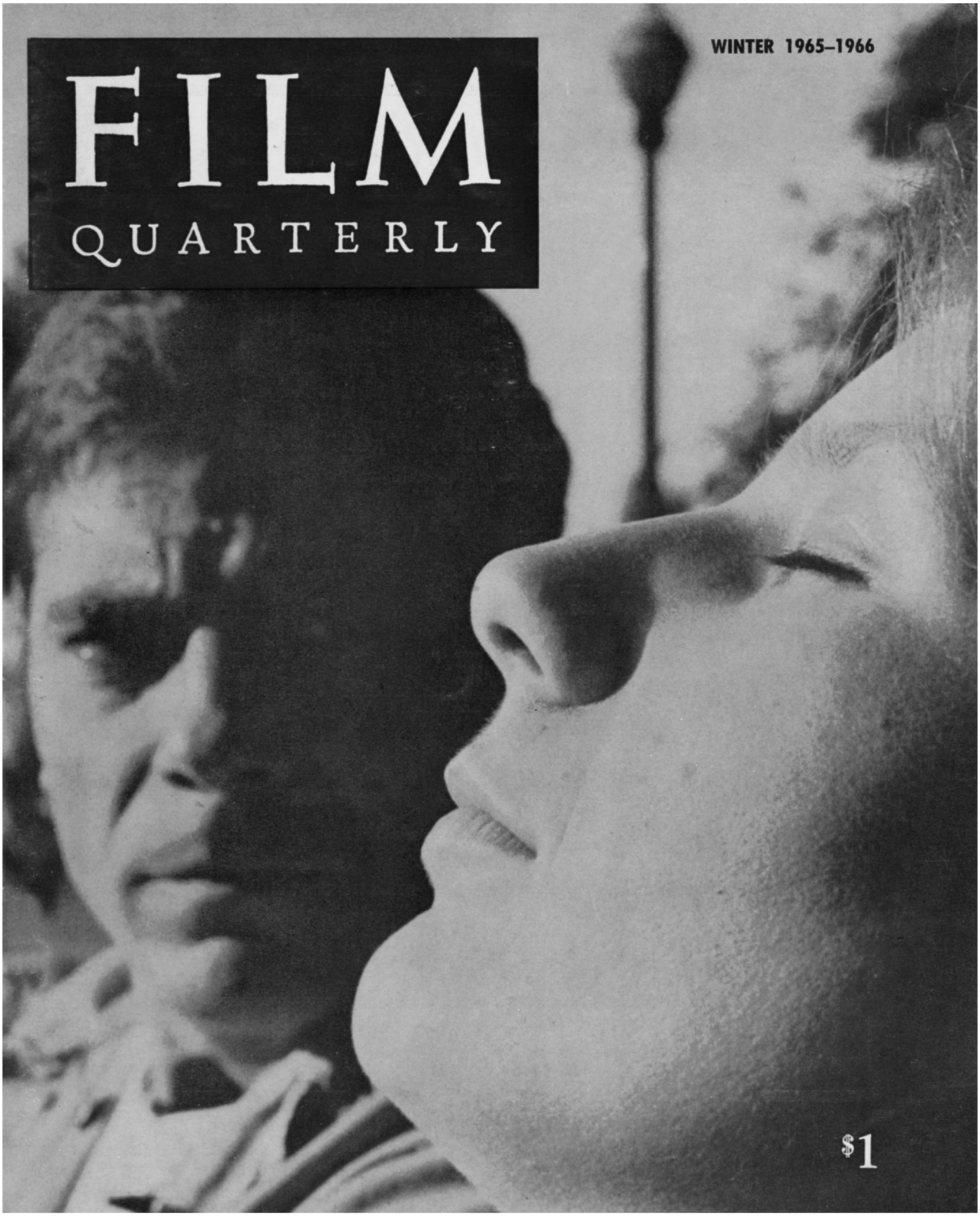
FILM QUARTERLY

WINTER 1965–1966



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VOL. XIX, NO. 2 WINTER 1965–1966

COVER: Chris Marker's *La Jetée*

Editor's Notebook

SCANDALS

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CONTRIBUTORS

JACKSON BURGESS is a novelist who teaches English at Berkeley. PETER GRAHAM is an Englishman resident in Paris. MICHAEL NOONAN is an industrial writer-editor and film aficionado; he lives in Los Angeles. DAVID PALETZ is a political scientist from UCLA who now lives in Washington. JOHN SEELYE teaches English at the University of California, Davis. JOHN THOMAS lives in Los Angeles and has been active in film societies. TUNG is a writer who lives in Berkeley. J. M. SVENDSEN teaches drama at Berkeley.

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JOHN THOMAS

John Frankenheimer

THE SMILE ON THE FACE OF THE TIGER

Some commercial directors are faceless; others assume a mask. But there's a third kind: the director who finds that the mask doesn't fit, and whose films are a struggle to remove it. The seven films of John Frankenheimer are one instance of that difficult struggle. The process of self-discovery has not always been linear, and indeed seems in retrograde at the moment. But where the search has been most intense, where the original face has begun to show through, there's been an excitement rarely matched in recent American films.

The qualities of a Frankenheimer movie are not the kind that can be demonstrated easily. You can point to the images, but it's much harder to describe and label the complex of irrationalities that make up the content of his best work. But let's say for now that Frankenheimer is an interesting director because he embodies within himself and his work so many of the ambiguities of American life, and is a major director because he is the only Hollywood film-maker in recent years to make these qualities the center of a film.

John Frankenheimer is one member of a unique generation of American film directors recruited from television. In the 1950's the television sets of this land glowed nightly with much "serious drama." Everyone in the right age-bracket remembers those morality plays about intolerance (in which no Negroes appeared) and humanism, broken homes and misunderstood children, that edified us between quiz shows. These dramas were the product of an age of indolent self-congratulation, a time when we could focus upon some minor deficiencies in our national life because the solutions seemed so simple. These dramas saw the hardened bigot convulse with love, the selfish father bloom insights about his wayward children. All problems were amenable to reason, to the illumination of common sense. Superficially critical, such plays in fact reflected the rationalistic optimism of the times.

The writers of that era moved on, as one might expect, to Broadway; the directors were called to Hollywood. Men like Sidney Lumet, Martin Ritt, John Frankenheimer, were the directorial stars of this period. Both their official credo and their working methods seemed to fit Hollywood's critical needs. Working in a tightly scheduled, almost spontaneous medium, they had learned to do their work quickly and cheaply. The ability to "edit in the camera" must have seemed important then less for aesthetic than for financial reasons. It was a period of crisis, the Blockbuster as yet uninvented, the standard Hollywood film disintegrating before the assault of the flickertube. At that time it seemed possible to save the film industry with methods stolen from the hated enemy.

It's instructive to look at the recent films of these men and see where the American dream has strayed. But it's particularly interesting to look at Frankenheimer's because, while the others appear unaware of any change in their outlook, he has moved from a stance of liberal optimism to open rebellion and virtual nihilism. If Frankenheimer has outstripped his colleagues as a creator, I think it's because in the course of documenting his changing attitudes he has made what has been merely implicit in most American films the subject of the best of his.

The Young Stranger, his first film, still has its admirers. For me it rather typifies that sort of film that all TV directors were expected to make once they turned to the movies; if the screen size is larger, the sensibility still comes on at 21 inches. Center of the story is a sullen ado-

lescent (James MacArthur) who somewhat abruptly finds himself "misunderstood" by his parents. For no apparent reason young MacArthur is suddenly set upon by most of the world, persecuted by cops and theater managers, ostracized by his friends. And, though he might have noticed something during the preceding 16 years, only now does he realize that his father hardly knows him. Parents, we are solemnly told, sometimes fail to understand their children.

If there is some validity in what the film is trying to say, all credibility crumples beneath the succession of persecutions heaped upon its teen-aged protagonist. The very unlikeliness of the plot, manipulated with such paranoid intensity, makes you wonder finally just what Frankenheimer is really up to. Well, something, apparently; for *The Young Stranger* turns out to be a rather disordered collection of all the themes (since they're probably largely unconscious I'd rather call them obsessions) that dominate the director's later work. If we organize these themes into a coherent pattern, we have almost a skeleton summary of the typical Frankenheimer movie: a protagonist, persecuted by powerful authority figures connected with his parents, finds that he has lost his freedom because his real personality has gone unrecognized. Unable to communicate his true nature to the authorities, he rebels at last to assert a personal freedom. Frankenheimer reworks this basic plot through three subsequent films before transforming it finally, and brilliantly, into *The Manchurian Candidate*.

In *The Young Stranger*, though, the Frankenheimer themes are embryonic, just as the Frankenheimer style is nonexistent. Whatever technical ambition he might have had for this first film was rather effectively frustrated. The camera peers at events impassively, virtually immobilized in medium shots. Frankenheimer has said that he was inhibited in what he wanted to do by an unsympathetic cameraman who resisted innovation. Even so, there are traces of the visual characteristics of his later work. The slow lap dissolve, which is the major transition device in all his films through *All Fall Down*,

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seems mainly a carry-over from television. More interesting is one scene in the family household, shot in deep focus, capturing the three members of the family in three different rooms, each parent intent upon his own separate activity, the boy watching them helplessly in the foreground. Deep focus reappears in Frankenheimer's later political thrillers to express, as it does here, the feel of alienation. But on the whole *The Young Stranger* is a film visually as well as thematically enervating; it sent Frankenheimer back to TV for three more years.

If his first film is unimaginative, his second is all technical ambition. *The Young Savages* explodes onto the screen with a violent opening title sequence built upon a succession of harsh, jagged cuts. Three members of a New York street gang invade a rival gang's territory to seek out and kill a blind Puerto Rican boy who has been acting as the rival gang's weapons cache. As the three boys stride along the street the

camera catches them with brief, angled shots, the editing cued to the rhythm of their stride, the music punctuating the jarring cuts. The rhythm is suspended momentarily as the camera turns upon the intended victim, singing and playing a guitar on the front porch of his tenement. Then the three killers appear, reflected in the blind boy's dark glasses, and the rhythm resumes. The murder is shot from a distance, as a bystander might see it. Then the sequence comes to a climax with a series of cross-cuts between the fleeing boys and pursuing police cars, ending with an extended long shot as the police round up the killers.

Nothing could be further from the non-style of *The Young Stranger;* but anyone could have done it. The whole sequence is built upon editing principles as old as Eisenstein, and the murder reflected in the victim's glasses is a loan from Hitchcock. Compare it with the opening of *Seven Days in May,* where a similar editing technique instantly evokes the tensions that crackle through the rest of the film. But the style of *The Young Savages* offers only a manipulative kind of excitement that in no way illuminates the significance of the action.

It's hard to take the substance of the movie very seriously, either. It's another outbreak of Hollywood Liberalism, with the young killers "victims of their environment" and their grim-faced prosecutor (played by grim-faced Burt Lancaster) trying to forget his own boyhood in the same slums; one of those movies in which the prosecution takes over the defense and proves the accused really innocent, the alternative of simply dropping the case never quite good enough. Like most films of its genre, this one is so unsure of its premises that it has to make liberal speeches about social responsibility at ten-minute intervals to keep itself going. The only people convinced by movies like this believed it all anyway, and came to the theater to bask in the glow of their own reflected righteousness.

The film is pretty much an uneasy alliance between standard homilies and the private thematic world of Frankenheimer's earlier film. Once again the plot centers about teen-agers, once again "misunderstood." Like the protagonist of *The Young Stranger,* these boys are not really guilty of the crimes of which they are accused. The Deputy DA, like an inadequate father, first rejects the boys, later defends them when he finds out what they're "really" like.

Despite the supposedly daring approach the movie has no real ideas to offer. All is generalized piety; specifics are avoided. One can hardly argue with the premises of the movie, at least in the abstract; but so what? "A lot of people killed your boy," intones Lancaster to the victim's mother. But he never mentions just who they are, or what we might do about them. There's plenty of rebellion, but no revolution.

Having said all this, let me say also that there are many good things in this film. Certainly, Frankenheimer knows his slums. The single room stuffed with beds and relatives in which the Puerto Rican gang leader lives could have been lifted bodily from East Harlem. The gangs, too, are brilliantly authentic. Many of the minor parts are taken by actual gang members, and here Frankenheimer shows a flair for handling non-actors. The majority of the boys, in fact, are much more interesting than the professionals. Happily, Frankenheimer has not followed the usual dodge of prettying up his juvenile delinquents. The murderous gang leader is easily one of the nastiest-looking creatures ever to come before a camera; any sympathy he evokes must be a result of the film's premises, since he's not likely to arouse much on his own. Frankenheimer is not afraid to show his likable Puerto Rican gang boss shaking down a delivery man, either. If the script is all humanist lecturing, the actual images give us a more balanced reality. These touches save the film from total failure; they cannot make it a success.

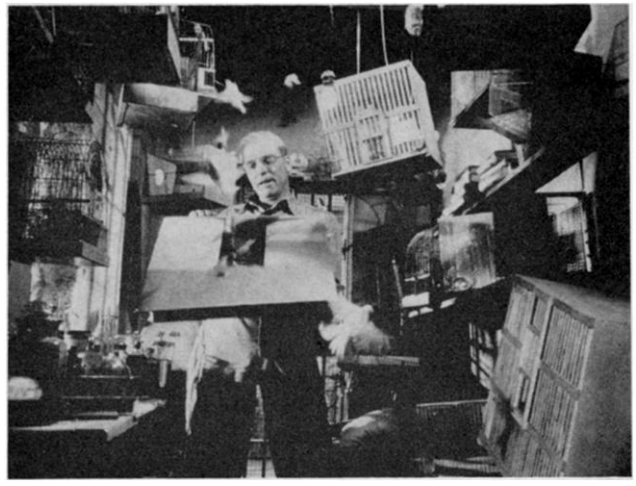
In *Birdman of Alcatraz,* however, Frankenheimer avoids most of his former mistakes. *Birdman* has its liberal speeches, but the points it makes are confirmed by action, not words. And its images are intelligently conceived to create an atmosphere of isolation and confinement wholly consistent with the script's major themes.

Birdman is perhaps the least-appreciated of Frankenheimer's successful films. The merits of

Robert Stroud, rather than the movie itself, have been the focus of most debate. Those who dislike the movie argue that Stroud is a double murderer whose 40 years in solitary confinement are well deserved. The film's defenders argue that Stroud has rehabilitated himself, and that his pioneering work as a student of bird diseases proves him too brilliant to be cut off from society. But arguments of this sort are rather beside the point. Frankenheimer has made a fiction film, using the Stroud case as an excuse to tell a certain kind of story. Obviously the movie stacks the cards in Stroud's favor, but this is important only if you think you're watching a documentary. You don't judge Dreyer's film by arguing over whether Joan was a witch or not. And the Robert Stroud of Frankenheimer's film is a character as fictional as the Joan of Dreyer's; both embody a meaning which transcends the justice of their particular cases, a human meaning which has very little to do with prison reform.

Like Frankenheimer's earlier films, *Birdman* is about rebellion. But, unlike the near-paranoid rebellion of those films, it's rebellion *for* something, rebellion that asserts the primacy of human values. Condemned to a meaningless life in prison, Stroud revolts against the prison rules to assert an individual meaning for his life. Rather than acquiesce in the makework tasks of the prison system, he insists upon pursuing his own interests—first, the keeping of birds as pets; later, the scientific investigation of their diseases. The changes that occur in his character—his "rehabilitation"—are in fact the result of his changing relationship to rebellion. Once he finds a meaning for his life in prison he is no longer merely the incorrigible inmate of the early scenes, but a man who will not conform because he has an individuality worth fighting for. The failure of the prison authorities to appreciate the distinction between these two forms of rebellion is the source of the film's central conflict.

You can regard *Birdman of Alcatraz*, if you want to, as an allegory about life. But it's not really an allegory, and its existentialism is but a by-product of its real concerns. Unlike some



BIRDMAN OF ALCATRAZ

movies (say, *The Train*) whose Ideas submerge their characters, *Birdman* remains firmly rooted in the personality of its hero. As with any genuine work of art, the generalization grows out of the well-realized specific.

A film rooted in character can succeed only if it has an actor capable of realizing the character. Burt Lancaster would not have seemed anyone's choice to meet this challenge, but his performance is surprisingly good. Perhaps an acute seizure of holiness near the film's end unnervingly recalls Elmer Gantry, but on the whole he is well-controlled. All the roles in this film, in fact, are well realized.

For the first time Frankenheimer demonstrates an ability to choose his film's images in a way that contributes materially to the mood of the story. *The Young Savages* had too much bravura for its own good; *Birdman* is so quietly realized that you may not notice how well done it really is. Confronted with themes of isolation and imprisonment, Frankenheimer looks for methods which can make visually concrete the atmosphere of the script. The bird cages that gradually fill Stroud's cell provide the primary image. For the progress of Stroud's isolation parallels fatefully his growing acquisition of a collection of caged birds, his cell eventually crowded with stacked and hanging cages. Everywhere the camera turns it is shooting through bars, bird cages, metal bed frames.

Shots of Stroud become inevitably shots of a bird in a cage—a device by no means as heavy-handed as it may sound.

Another particularly beautiful visual equivalent of alienation occurs when the woman whom Stroud has married to publicize his case comes to visit him in prison. Since he is in isolation, the two must confront each other through a thick plate of glass which admits no sound. Seated a few feet apart, they talk to each other over a telephone hookup, their only means of communication despite their proximity. The image is not only moving in itself, but important as the germ of the television communications network that Frankenheimer later makes his primary image of alienation in *Seven Days in May*.

Within this intelligent, well-realized story, however, not all is well. A subplot apparently unrelated to the theme suggests that Frankenheimer's obsessions are not entirely under control even here. For Robert Stroud, we find, is abnormally attached to his mother. He keeps a picture of her on his cot and growls menacingly at other prisoners who dare touch it. Because of a minor prison infraction Stroud is reported by a guard and his privilege of seeing his mother is taken away; in anger Stroud kills the guard. It is for this specific act that he is placed in solitary confinement. Stroud's mother begins a campaign to save her son from execution, a campaign which eventually succeeds. But later, when Stroud meets and marries a fellow birder, Mother is displeased and refuses to help her son further. As a result, the attempt to have him released from isolation fails. Stroud's 40 years in solitary confinement, therefore, are a direct consequence of his relationship to his mother. What's even more interesting is the fact that Stroud's wife, over whom the row erupts, is played by an actress closely resembling the photograph of Stroud's mother. Like most mother-ridden sons, Stroud winds up with a duplicate of his "much loved-and-hated mother." Rebelling consciously against maternal ties, he unconsciously accepts them in another person.

With *All Fall Down* the Mother theme becomes uppermost, although not yet explicit. Inge's script gives us a fairly straightforward story about a boy's disillusionment with his older brother after a long period of hero-worship. Brandon deWilde is supposedly our hero, with Warren Beatty getting his just deserts after a bastardly affair with Eva Marie Saint. It's all routine Hollywood moralism on the surface, saved by a lot of offbeat humor, and Angela Lansbury's portrayal of the child-eating Mother.

But beneath its superstructure, *All Fall Down* creaks with a myriad of ambiguities, relating it in many ways to its lineal descendant, *Hud*. A sneaking admiration for the character played by Beatty is fatally balanced by an irresistible desire to make deWilde look like an idiot. It's pretty clear from the start that all the males' troubles stem from their life with Big Mother, but only Beatty has the wit to rebel. His revolt is supposedly irresponsible and destructive, but it's not too easy to see why. His remarks on the unpleasantness of working ("When I worked all day to earn money I was too tired to stay up all night to spend it") seem pretty sensible if you define work as the holding down of a conventional job. And nobody else in the movie seems to be doing anything very creative, anyway. His villainy is supposedly compounded by the casual nature of his affairs, as if most affairs were not casual. But since the women initiate the action, why condemn Beatty for following through? True, he's continually giving them a black eye, but they do seem to deserve it. In short, despite all the moralizing, Beatty is pretty much the image of what most men would secretly like to be.

Given this fact, the values the film seems to uphold begin to give way. The younger brother whose Education we are witnessing turns out to be incapable of learning anything. Faced with his older brother's offer of sexual adventure, he can only gulp and bite into an apple. His courtship of the older girl, Echo, is confined to secreting notes in her glove compartment. And when he finally decides to shoot his brother, he can't even pull the trigger. That seems a little *too* symbolic.

Despite the script, Beatty is the real protagonist, the young rebel who has been the focus

of Frankenheimer's earlier films. Like those other rebels, he is fighting established authority. The representatives of that authority are, as usual, parental; they want him to follow the rules and he won't. And it's hard to see why he should, considering the sort of people those defenders of morality turn out to be. Beatty's father is an ineffectual sot, his mother a domineering bitch. DeWilde is a prig, and the girl Beatty supposedly betrays is a whining virgin. So unsympathetically drawn are these characters that the final moralistic conclusion seems more ominous than uplifting.

One of the film's real ironies is to be found in the affair between Beatty and Miss Saint. The young rebel's revolt looks quite meaningless when he winds up with a girl whose relationship to him is essentially motherly. Hating his real mother, whose incestuous longings toward him are made all but explicit, he falls for a 31-year-old virgin who has found men her own age without attraction. Like Stroud's wife, like Jocelyn Jordan, Echo is the mother-substitute who brings the hero to disaster. Her demands destroy him precisely because he is not conscious that she embodies all the oppressive qualities from which he had previously fled.

Frankenheimer's images work consistently against the moralizing grain of the script. The apple orchard where Beatty's major orgies take place looks genuinely romantic, while the conventional love scenes with Echo are shot near-satirically with gliding swans, halo effects, and soft-focus. Frankenheimer's slow lap dissolves in this context appear so lushly romantic as to suggest burlesque. The claustrophobic decor of the family's Victorian house contrasts with Beatty's own rootless freedom. And Echo, too, appears a prisoner of the past; her prize possession, next to an equally antique virginity, is her vintage automobile.

It's hard to be sure if the director is aware here of what he is doing. There are some who will tell you that the virtues of Frankenheimer's next film got there without his knowledge, a contention which any close examination of that film will show to be absurd. But it's not too much to suspect that the internal disintegration of *All Fall Down* is an accident, that the real feelings of the director unconsciously sabotaged his high intentions. Whatever the cause, the result is an entertaining, but not successful, movie. Good movies are not made by people who split form and content so that we can all

ALL FALL DOWN

enjoy seeing the film fall apart. If there's a certain morbid pleasure to be gained from watching structural disasters, it's not the pleasure we expect from art.

With four movies completed, Frankenheimer had by now begun to exhibit a distinct directorial personality, at least in his choice of themes. The flashy ambitiousness of *The Young Savages* seemed behind him, the style more studied. But if he was talented, the talent appeared no more than minor. The obsessional nature of his themes seemed too narrow, too personal, to be shaped into more universal images. His movies looked too much like expressions of personal neuroses, unrelated to more important issues. No one was expecting a major film from John Frankenheimer just yet. The release of his next movie, then, caught most people sleeping.

The Manchurian Candidate is the nightmare of history played for laughs. Billed originally as a suspense film, it turns out to be a comedy on the surface with tragedy at the next layer down. Its immensely complex structure threads from improbability to absurdity, transforming one of the wildest plots in modern films into a hideously believable portrait of our times. It's not just black comedy, but the blackest black comedy ever filmed: a gruesome amalgam of shocks designed to force the spectator to laugh when he should cry. Brilliantly staged, almost flawless in its art, it so violently uproots every preconception of the average American movie that you may not notice how thoroughly American it is. Simply, the best Hollywood film in years.

It's so good in so unexpected a way that most people who saw it are still blind to what they saw. Which is hardly surprising; audiences are so thoroughly conditioned by their expectations that they will react to any film pretty much as they think they're supposed to. But most critics saw no more than the public they ostensibly inform. Stanley Kauffmann ridiculed the scene in which Janet Leigh pursues Sinatra on the train; he didn't even see that it was funny! Equally straight-faced were Dwight Macdonald and the little old ladies at *Films in Review;* the latter saw new evidence of a leftist plot. In short, few liked it because few could fit it into their preconceptions about movies, or about life. Unable to assimilate the fact that they were supposed to laugh at the "sad parts," they simply failed to see what was happening on the screen. Pauline Kael points out that no one she talked to who disliked the movie could remember that, when the liberal Senator is shot, milk seems to spurt from his breast.

The ability to laugh at the film is the first requisite for enjoying it; but few of the people who were equipped to appreciate it could laugh. The black humor—the sadistic humor, if you like—cuts directly against the grain of humanist sensibility. If the rightists hated the film because of the way it ridiculed the McCarthyish Senator Iselin, the liberals hated it even more. It's only incidentally illiberal in its political satire; but it's profoundly illiberal in its grotesque, its almost joyous, relish for violence. To be able to like the film is to put aside one's veneer of humanism and acknowledge the reality of one's secret fantasies.

Few middle-class liberals, unsurprisingly, found this possible. When I first saw the movie, with a well dressed, sober-looking crowd of suburbanites, about five people in the full house were laughing at the funny things. Seeing it again with an audience made up largely of working-class families, many of minority racial and ethnic groups, I heard the crowd laugh unaffectedly and burst into applause at the film's end. These people, no strangers to violence, uninhibited by any middle-class commitment to humanism, were unashamed to acknowledge the film's appeal to their anarchic impulses. Unlike the liberals, they were accustomed in their own lives to making the concessions the film demands.

I have discussed critical reaction at such length because I think it illuminates in many ways the film's central theme. *The Manchurian Candidate* is about brainwashing—not just Chinese Communist brainwashing, but the kind that affects all of us every day. Each major character in the movie is a victim of brainwashing of one kind or another, unfree because he is the prisoner of other men's ideas. Raymond Shaw,

the victim of the Chinese plot, is already a prisoner of his relationship to his mother. Hardly conscious of the fact that as a soldier he is already a killer, he has become a murder weapon that need only be aimed back in the direction from whence it came. Major Marco, the most obviously sympathetic character, is a prisoner, too: "I don't have a home, I'm in the army." He even lets a bookseller select his reading for him! Eugenie Rose, Marco's girl-friend, falls into a near-trance when she first sees him. And the various politicians, if not prisoners of their wives, are victims of their own ideological delusions. If the world evoked is one of monstrous tyranny, it is a tyranny of which men are largely unaware.

Raymond Shaw, that victim of the tyranny about whom the film revolves, is able at the end to see through the curtain of masks and break free. His assertion of freedom, in which he kills the person who embodies all oppression, is that act of rebellion which has been at the center of Frankenheimer's films. But in this movie, as in no other, the director has succeeded in making of his personal obsessions a mirror for the nightmare of our times.

As earlier, Frankenheimer uses the parental relationship as a metaphor for oppression. Angela Lansbury, inflating her portrayal of the American Mom into evil incarnate, carries off brilliantly this central conception. Raymond Shaw's domineering mother has brainwashed him from the start, directed his life, crippled his manhood. She also dominates her husband, Senator Iselin, planning his campaign of anti-Communist smears while she works for the Communists. As the chief Red agent in the United States, she embodies within a single person both parental and political totalitarianism. What appears on the surface but a fantastic plot twist—the revelation that Raymond's mother is a Communist agent and the instigator of his brainwashing—is in fact the only logical development possible. Clearly, the single act by which Raymond can make himself free from all forms of tyranny is the one he takes at the film's climax—he kills his mother.

Raymond's subservience to his mother both as son and Communist puppet is set off beautifully by a subplot following his relationship with the liberal Senator's daughter. Jocelyn Jordan is that by-now-familiar figure, the mother substitute. As in *All Fall Down*, the mother's incestuous longing for her son is obvious. We see that Raymond Shaw is virginal and puritanical, presumably because the only woman he really wants is his mother. Jocelyn appears at a costume party dressed as the Queen of Diamonds, the playing card which serves as the "trigger mechanism" for Mrs. Iselin's control of her brain-washed son. Raymond immediately flies off with Jocelyn to get married, and in a brief scene we see that both he and the girl are sexually satisfied. In marrying Jocelyn, Raymond thinks he is defying his mother and acting freely; but in reality he has again become a victim, even if accidentally, of his mother's tyranny.

Mother, then, is the source of all slavery; freedom is gained only when she is killed. Oversimplified Frankenheimer's equation may be, but we know that it reflects something like the real truth. Our parental relationships really do establish pretty much the way we relate to authority, and our ability to be free in the world depends a lot on how much freedom from the personalities of our parents we've achieved. The archetypal hero, the mythical dragon slayer, is really killing the destructive aspects of his parents. Raymond Shaw is like him, able to put on his Congressional Medal of Honor only after he

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shoots his mother. Raymond is set apart from the two most conventionally sympathetic characters in the film; Major Marco and his girl friend need not endure Raymond's trial, since both were orphaned at birth. But Raymond is the true hero, for he must endure the tyranny, become conscious of it, and act to destroy it.

This is why I've said that a layer of tragedy lies below the comedy. And I meant it literally, since *The Manchurian Candidate* has elements of both *The Choephori* and *Oedipus*. But let me go on to say something about the nature of its comedy.

The Manchurian Candidate is a very funny film, and funniest just where it should be saddest. Every murder, each more shocking than the last, is made comic through visual tricks, exaggerated acting styles, near-pratfall posturing. The visual humor is brilliantly absurd. The liberal Senator framed in his first appearance by gilt American eagle wings; the burlesque wedding portrait of the Negro corporal; the fantastic metamorphoses from garden club ladies to Communist officials in the Manchurian scenes; a door inscribed with the firm injunction, "No"—these images are the core of the film's comedy. George Axelrod's lines are funny, but they are not what make the film something special.

Let me take one incident to show something of how Frankenheimer has made comedy out of some of the straight material in the script. In the scene that annoyed Stanley Kauffmann, Janet Leigh follows Frank Sinatra into the corridor of a train and starts a halting conversation. Sinatra, on the edge of breakdown for reasons unconnected with Miss Leigh, tries desperately to respond. "Are you Arabic?" he asks distractedly. Now this line appears in Richard Condon's novel, but there the girl is described as dark and hook-nosed, quite possibly Semitic. Axelrod has carried over the dialogue from this scene with little alteration. But Frankenheimer has cast the part with Janet Leigh, who is notably non-Arabic. The logical thing to do would be to alter the dialogue to eliminate the meaningless question; but Frankenheimer lets it stand. The result is that the question is not simply meaningless, but within the context of the scene, and the atmosphere of the whole movie, absurdly comic. And though it seems a piece of gratuitous nonsense, in reality it meshes neatly into the film's dual identity theme.

The film's visual brilliance is not confined to the development of its comedy. Watch the way Frankenheimer treats the helicopters in the opening sequence, transforming the machines into lumbering, grotesque insects. And note the scene in the hearing room chamber where Senator Iselin makes his first charge of Communists in the Defense Department. Using a deep-focus lens, Frankenheim places a television monitor in the foreground, Mrs. Iselin gloating in the middle-distance, and Iselin in the background—a fair representation of the actual hierarchies of power. As Iselin shouts his charges, the monitor picks up the background figure and transforms it into an image that seems to be shouting back at the real person. That old war horse, failure of communication, has rarely been illustrated more neatly and less pretentiously. Surrounding his people with grotesque pieces of furniture, of machinery, of architecture, Frankenheimer evokes the landscape of a half-mad world stumbling blindly toward destruction.

The Manchurian Candidate, then, operates on a level entirely removed from that of the preceding films. Where they were only *about* rebellion, *The Manchurian Candidate* is itself an *act* of rebellion, a revolt against conventional, and perhaps desirable, forms of sensibility. This is probably why it's so much better than Frankenheimer's other films; the themes and approach provide a catharsis that allows him to marshall perhaps previously unsuspected talents into the service of his vision. He as much as Raymond Shaw has been released from unconscious bondage, Shaw in killing his mother, Frankenheimer in "killing" the humanist values to which he had previously assented.

Confronting similar political themes in *Seven Days in May*, Frankenheimer continues to develop his images of disorder. The television screen, which had been used rather tentatively

to suggest alienation in the preceding film, now dominates the frame. Levels of reality are differentiated as the movie screen multiplies events four times across a row of monitors. The TV screens at the Pentagon, ostensibly designed to keep track of personnel, instead keep us continually disoriented. The human figures and their ghostly images seem to walk off in different directions, leaving the viewer with a feeling that the rug has been pulled. In the scene in which Major Casey searches General Scott's office while the General himself is seen to approach on the television screen, the suspense is heightened by the fact that we cannot tell for sure if the General is drawing nearer or not. When he does appear, it is from the direction opposite to that which the monitor seems to show. The effect has the shock of a jump cut, disorienting our sense of reality and adding to the electric atmosphere of anxiety.

Frankenheimer exploits brilliantly the fundamental fact that a man's public image appears more than human. The flesh-and-blood characters we meet seem but appendages of the images thrust at us from television screens and billboards; our first introduction to the film's two antagonists is not to their persons, but through placards carried by pickets in front of the White House. These public images are at least equal in power to their human referents. They remind us constantly of the political nature of the contest; they provide irony as well when we find how little of what is shown to the public reflects the realities of the struggle.

The communications media are in fact more important than the people in *Seven Days*. The film gives us the story of a military plot to overthrow an unpopular President (Fredric March), the coup engineered by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General George Mattoon Scott (Burt Lancaster). The key to the takeover is not an armed uprising, but an attempt to gain control of the nation's channels of communication. Center of the militarist plot is ECONCOM, General Scott's plan to seize the television networks and announce the coup. It's taken for granted that this will settle everything. The General's grievance against the President is a disarmament pact with the Soviet Union which he contends will leave the country defenseless. The President's difficulty has been his inability to get his side of the story across to the American people, since Scott and his allies have largely held the public ear. The plot is broken up and final victory achieved only when the President is able to announce Scott's forced resignation over the television networks before the General can seize them. The public media defeat the private world of letters, notes, and maps used by Scott and his allies. Like the Queen of Diamonds, the TV screen is more than a trick device; it is a symbol of the film's basic themes.

On the surface, *Seven Days in May* is just another piece of Hollywood Liberalism. True to that tradition, it is profoundly conservative. The notion that it's unconstitutional to overthrow the government may be correct, but hardly to the point. No revolution, including our own, has been what you'd call legal. Revolutions occur because the established government has used the national constitution, or what passes for one, as a shield for oppression. No revolution can help being illegal; the question is whether or not it's necessary.

The unambiguous thrust of Rod Serling's semi-literate script is all for the President, against General Scott. Scott is, in fact, the first of Frankenheimer's rebels who is unequivocally condemned. We find that not only does he want to overthrow the government, but has a cast-off mistress as well. His allies are extremists and racists, while the worst the President can muster is a friend who drinks too much. Scott's villainy, in effect, makes any real discussion of issues superfluous.

The weakness of political insight is typical of this kind of film. In the rush to offend no one, everything is oversimplified to the point of meaninglessness. There's a lot of brave naming-of-names (the names are those of Senator McCarthy and General Walker), but nobody is attacked who would have much opportunity to fight back. The issue over which the coup de-

THE TRAIN

velops, the nuclear disarmament pact between the U.S. and Russia, is used as an excuse for political posturing rather than serious discussion. The President's assertion that if the bombs aren't controlled they're bound to go off is true enough, God knows, but we're all aware of that and yet nothing seems to change. Our nuclear policy has been buying time from the outset, as if time never ran out. But this fact, though alluded to at the end, plays no real part in *Seven Days*. It's much easier to turn the audience against General Scott by showing us his unhappy ex-mistress.

And the fundamental causes of the madness we see are never brought forward, either. President Lyman wants to blame the tension on "a nuclear age"; but we can surmise from the very images Frankenheimer gives us that the nuclear age is but a symptom of this sick world, not its cause. The deeper problems of our time the movie won't discuss. It's as alienated from reality as the world it portrays.

With *The Train,* however, Frankenheimer is on surer ground. The script is intelligent, the execution flawless. Like any good train movie it's full of spectacular wrecks, shots of spinning wheels, and engines roaring over the camera. The surface action flows smoothly, never subordinating itself to the allegory that develops naturally underneath. And Frankenheimer's handling of actors, at low ebb in *Seven Days,* is again something to watch.

The film offers once more a clash between two irrational forces, the contenders this time posing as Cultivation and Barbarism, the masks again slowly peeled away. It's World War II, and a German colonel (Paul Scofield) has looted a trainload of Modern and Impressionist paintings from the Jeu de Paumes. Perhaps he wants them for Germany, more likely for himself. The French Resistance leader Labiche (Burt Lancaster again) is asked to stop the train and recover these paintings, "the glory of France." Though he refuses at first, the murder of a friend by the Colonel turns the political issue into a personal contest. As Labiche moves to stop the train, more and more lives are lost. The Colonel is willing to sacrifice any number of troops to get his precious artwork through. To him, the paintings are worth far more than any number of human beings. But to Labiche, too, the issue of "winning" by stopping the train becomes all-important, and the man who first acted to avenge the death of a friend in the end sacrifices all his friends to achieve his purpose.

The Train is again about modern history, and what we have made of our ideals. Those paintings, "the glory of France," become only incidental objects in a personal contest between two men so convinced of their rightness that they are ready to destroy all that the ideals are supposed to represent. No one can say how many have been slaughtered in this century in the name of "freedom," of "justice," of "honor," of "national sovereignty." In this ideological age mere human beings become expendable in the defense of the very values which supposedly enrich human life. Ideas live a greater life than men.

The Train tells us about this without undue moralizing or pretentious allegory. The points are made simply, always through the story. There are no speeches, no conversations which 'put in the symbols,' nothing but a smoothly done adventure story that rolls along to its inevitable, and moving, climax. Perhaps it's the

most intelligently done movie Frankenheimer has made.

But as a film it's not very interesting. Everything is carried off so well that somehow there's little to take note of. No new visual metaphors intrude here, nothing beyond the crisp professionalism of the gifted craftsman. *The Train* might have been a great movie, but we just do not remember enough of it. I know of but one sure criterion of a film's greatness: the persistence of its images. We don't forget Joan of Arc's face, the steps at Odessa, Kane's mansion. These images transcend the story that the films themselves have to tell. But there's nothing in *The Train* to haunt us. Its one imaginative device, a juxtaposition of the bodies of murdered hostages and the scattered crates of paintings, is too derivative to maintain its power long after the film's end.

Perhaps it's because the film is *too* intelligent, because it presents its unreason so rationally, that interest wavers. The very professionalism and smooth craftsmanship work against it, since its well-developed continuity has nothing to do with the kind of world the film is trying to show us. The imagery of *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days* told us more than their stories; but *The Train* has no imagery at all.

Perhaps without the presence of those personal themes which in the past had structured his films Frankenheimer cannot work at the peak of his creative powers. Certainly *The Train* is the least personal of his later films. He came to it late after another director had left, and perhaps lacked the opportunity to shape it into something completely his own. Whatever the reason, *The Train* is one of those very good movies that we soon forget.

Frankenheimer's new project finds him back in familiar territory. *Seconds*, from David Ely's novel, is about a man fed up with his empty life who is given a chance to start over with a new identity. Along with the familiar theme of dual identity there are generous dashes of parent-child conflict, lost innocence Fellini-style, and brainwashing extended to the logical end of brain removal. The script, by the young playwright Lewis John Carlino, is a blend of science-fiction nightmare with dreamy nostalgia for the past that doesn't seem quite workable on paper. But who can judge a film before it's finished? And *Seconds*, as I write this, is still in production.

There's no telling, in fact, just what Frankenheimer's eighth film may be like. His work shows thus far no clear record of unbroken progress, and *Seconds* could be anything from a masterpiece to a disaster. A lot will depend upon factors still hard to assess at this stage of the directo's career. Obviously, Frankenheimer depends a great deal upon his collaborators. Much of the brilliance of *The Manchurian Candidate* was undoubtedly the result of a happy affinity for Richard Condon's novel and George Axelrod's way with a script. The fact that he could move from *The Manchurian Candidate* directly into a comparatively trivial film like *Seven Days in May* suggests either faulty taste or a limited control over his properties. But the career of a commercial director does not ordinarily allow every film to be what be would like it to be, even if he has a relatively free hand. Frankenheimer's career is likely to resemble Hitchcock's rather than Antonioni's.

And of course there's no reason to believe he would want it any other way. He seems perfectly content to work out his ideas within the context of the Hollywood system—in this, at least, he's no rebel at all. But given the right collaborators, the right story, the right stimulation, he may again fuse personal fantasy with the world's madness and give us something wonderful. We have reason to hope.

DAVID PALETZ AND MICHAEL NOONAN

The Exhibitors

EDITOR'S NOTE: To most readers of this journal, the film is primarily of concern as an art—practiced, fitfully and against dire odds, by a dedicated band of directors, writers, actors. It is important to be reminded, therefore, that the center of economic gravity of the film industry really lies, not in the spectacular studios, but in real estate. It is in the thousands of theaters where films and public finally meet that the costs of the entire production and distribution mechanism must be raised. The most crucial pressure-point in the complex process by which film-makers propose, while distributors and exhibitors and public dispose, is the box-office.

Some affect to despise the box-office as the blind agent of mass pressures; some regard it as the oracle by which every decision should be made; to the lucky director it can sometimes be his vindication against the arbitrary opinions of producers. But not much is known outside the trade about who actually presides over the box-office. Below, to follow up the documentation given to current Hollywood production methods in our Spring 1965 issue, we present interviews with three exhibitors. Their operations characterize three important trends in the ways movies are now being presented to the American public: the drive-in, the art theater, and the nudie-cutie house. We also attempted to secure an interview with an executive of the powerful Fox West Coast theater chain, but repeated efforts finally met with a flat refusal. Luckily, however, many factors are common these days to drive-in and "walk-in" theaters.

The interviews have been condensed for publication, and questions raised by the interviewers have often been indicated by general headings.

THE DRIVE-IN

BART PIROSH *is an executive of Pacific Drive-Ins, a growing chain which also operates walk-in theaters in the Los Angeles area.*

Background

I got into the business because I was out of a job in 1929 and I wrote a letter to 100 large corporations, just a general application, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer was one of the two answers I got. (The other was from a shoe store.) They hired me as a student booker; I was 21 years old at the time. This was in New York City. Then they sent me to Albany and Cleveland for training and to Milwaukee as a feature booker. After 3 years I went to work for Fox Mid-West Theatres, which is an offspring of the company which is National General Corporation today. Worked there for 3 years as a booker and I quit my job and came to the coast and went to work for Fox West Coast Theatres as a booker. I was with them for 21 years with some time out for the Army during the war. Then I quit my job there and came to Pacific. At Fox West Coast I was a booker and then I was assistant head of the Booking Department and eventually I became the head of the Buying Department. I had some disagreements with basic company policy and I finally quit and came here.

The business is an interesting business, it's a changing business. However, I would say my primary reason has been financial, I work for money and if I were offered a job which I thought was much more interesting and intriguing but it involved an appreciable reduction in financial recompense, I wouldn't take it. My first obligation, I think, is to my family and to myself and to my future. I have seen the pendulum swing back and forth two or three times from when business was good and on the upgrade and then it declined, and then it's hey-hey, everybody's going to build a million theaters, and then they go into bankruptcy. Now the building is on and inevitably the pendulum will swing back and people will find something to attract them for a while. A number of theaters are going to be hurt very badly and actually a number are being hurt now. But . . . I like the work, I enjoy the work to a degree. It gets to be a chore at times; I'm not particularly fond of motion pictures as a means of

entertainment, but this is the stuff I work with. Same as a man who makes radios doesn't have to enjoy listening to radios. But it keeps you busy and it pays well.

A booker is a man who decides, either unilaterally or in consultation with other people, what picture he will play in a specific theater on a specific date. For example, we agree with Columbia on terms for *Cat Ballou*—we will play it in a drive-in theater in a certain area and then the booker selects, in consultation with Columbia, the theater in which it will play and for how long and so on. He has to fill out the program with a second picture, with short subjects, and he has to know, in order to do this, the tastes of the public; the kind of pictures he thinks will appeal to the people in those theaters. There used to be a very strong distinction between film buying and booking. Today it is pretty much of a piece and on most pictures there is no expanded discussion, at least in our theaters, of the terms, because things fall into a pattern after a while and the gross of the picture in the individual theaters pretty much determines the terms it will receive, at least in our operation. If a picture grosses $4,000 in a theater, it may receive 25% of the gross; if it's $7,000, it may get 40%; if it does $14-15,000, they may get 50%.

We play a lot of pictures which are first-run Los Angeles on a multiple run. For instance, this past week, *Help* was first run. *Sons of Katie Elder* was first run. We get some of the so-called important pictures first run. We get all of the junk offered as first run because of the type of service that we have. Sometimes what you would call junk will do a lot more business for us than the top picture; than some of the alleged quality pictures. For example, *The Outrage.* A picture like that is mediocre in our theaters. Actually, *Outrage* wasn't a big picture anyway. No, pictures like *Taboos of the World,* which are garbage; *Mondo Cane* or stuff like that. *Fanny Hill,* which is coming up, will do a lot more business than a number of pictures that we would do well with, *Casanova 70,* for example, which is a classic picture. *Pink Panther* was just so-so in the drive-ins.

PHOTO: LAURIE MILLER

The drive-in audience is comparatively an unsophisticated audience and your sophisticated comedies, your musicals, your so-called class pictures do much less business in drive-ins than they will in the walk-in theaters in most areas. Our audiences are primarily a family audience. We have a double, a twin audience. We get the teen-agers and the young 20's and the daters. We live on the family audience—the family with the young children to whom several things are important, all of which have been spoken of to death, but it's true: no baby sitters, you don't have to dress up, no parking charges, you have complete privacy, the cost is less over-all because children under 12 years are free. We have a 50¢ admission for juniors up from 12 through 15 and the families fudge on the ages and we don't try to make an issue of it and when we play a picture with family appeal, a big western like *Cheyenne Autumn,* or *Help,* we will average, perhaps if we have 5,000 cars in the theaters in the course of a week, we will perhaps have 5,000 children. In Honolulu we sometimes have considerably more than one child per car. Our audience basically is the lower-middle class.

Business

Business in many areas is very good. Business is very good for the distributors today. We are in a seller's market, in most areas, especially the urban areas. There are more theaters wanting a picture or wanting a good picture, than there are good pictures available. Up until 1950, per-

haps even past that, you were in a buyer's market where, because of the rules under which pictures were being sold, the national circuits could pretty much dictate the terms on which they played the pictures. Not completely, but they bought the pictures on very reasonable terms. But the studios up until the late forties were prosperous and everybody was making enough and they owned circuits of theaters and they were happy. Now after the divorce [the antitrust decree "divorcing" production and exhibition interests], with the start of independent productions, you run into a situation where the man who makes one picture doesn't care what happens to the theaters at all and doesn't care what happens to the producing company. He just knows that he made a picture and he will get more money for this picture if it's released the first of July than any other time and this is the date he wants. And if Columbia says, well, we'd like to handle your picture but we can't guarantee the first of July, he goes to somebody who will, frequently. And when he makes the deal, he reserves to himself the right to designate the release date, to approve advertising figures. This is if he's an important producer or a hot one, somebody thinks he's important at the time. Now this has created a terrible scarcity of pictures on the so-called off-seasons, starting from August until Thanksgiving. During this period (actually until Christmas) there are very few of the so-called important pictures, pictures on which they hope to gross $7 to $10 million, released. The man who has an important picture during this period has, in most towns, several people fighting over the right to play their picture first-run. For example, when *Mary Poppins* was released last year, or *Great Race* this year. They are able to command very high terms from the theaters that will bite. And they impose very severe conditions on the theaters that want to play it. If you wanted to buy *Mary Poppins* last October, you had to guarantee a minimum of 12 weeks playing time, which took it through New Year's, into the middle of January. You had to guarantee minimum terms of 60% for the first four weeks, 50% for the next four weeks. Again the 90-10 deal, which means 90% over an agreed-upon figure. You had to agree to charge certain admissions. Now it's illegal for the distributors to tell a theater what admission price to charge, but the theaters that played it all had pretty healthy minimum admissions, especially children's admissions. And coincidence hardly covers what happened at these times.

You take a picture like *My Fair Lady*. Warner's, when they first released it, laid out a minimum that up to a certain time, and I don't know what the time was, they would not accept less than $50,000 advance guarantee, to be paid before the picture opened, and that the minimum terms accepted would be 70% for a certain period of time and so on. So when things like this happen and when you have such a scarcity of pictures, I'd say 30 weeks a year at least, for theaters like ours, you're in a seller's market and film terms increase bit by bit.—Partly because of the very sharp higher terms on certain pictures, but a general creeping-up of terms because of the fact that in most instances a distributor with a good picture has a thing that people are competing for. But people say that . . . well, Pacific, they can name their own terms, because they have most of the good drive-ins in this area.

We actually have in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, including Orange County and Long Beach, going out as far as San Bernardino, we have approximately 40 drive-ins. But we will have three or four in one competitive area. In the San Fernando Valley we have nine drive-ins, I think. So this means that we need three or four pictures each week. Well, there aren't 156 pictures made in a year, so obviously some of the pictures have to play two or three weeks in either an individual theater or in the area, moving from one to the other. When we played *Goldfinger*, before we completed our showings of it, it played in every first-run theater we operate. So we are under the same stress of looking for pictures that the man is who has two competitors in his little town. With the exception of the summertime and Thanksgiving week and Christmas week, possibly Eastertime, we're in a scramble for pictures. Everybody has

a picture to release at Christmas or two and there you may be in a buyer's market for a week or two, but if you try to take advantage of your strength that week, you're punished very severely later on. Look, this is like any other business, like politics, you run into power plays and you have to be realistic and you have to analyze your strength as opposed to the strength of the other man. This is also true in film buying and booking. You're in a tug of war for one thing. All the money comes in the box-office. Now the fight is on: how much of it does the theater keep, how much does the distributor keep, and then the fight is between the distributor and the producer. Before that you have had the tug-of-war between the personalities, the director, the writer, the star. And you have people now who get 10% of every dollar that comes through or 10% of . . . when they say the gross, they mean the film rental. Now this is all money and there's no romance. This is a money business.

The Films

I won't book, and we don't play the so-called nudies in our theaters, and for various obvious reasons. We are primarily a family operation and we will not play a lot of the art pictures, or so-called art pictures. For instance, *The Lovers* we wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole because we would get more hell from our patrons who object strenuously at times to pictures like *Shot in the Dark.* We got objections when we played *Tom Jones.* In fact, we try to be more careful than most theaters. We will play *Casanova 70;* we will do only fair. A lot of people say we shouldn't be playing it. It will be dubbed. You see, you can't read sub-titles in a drive-in back of the first few rows. We tried on *La Dolce Vita* to develop, the producer tried to develop, a larger sub-title that could be read in the drive-ins. He couldn't do it, so we couldn't play it. He wanted to play drive-ins and he wouldn't, or couldn't, dub it. What the problem was, I don't know. They may have thought it would not have been worthwhile. You see, that kind of picture I don't think we would have done well with.

The drive-ins do proportionately better with the big westerns and big outdoor pictures. These are usually the best grosses. And real good family pictures. Our top gross since I've been here have been pictures like *The Vikings, The Parent Trap, Carpetbaggers,* the Beatles' pictures do well, *The Alamo, Ben-Hur. Major Dundee* was a bomb, knocked dead. They didn't like it, they didn't want it. See, the advertising is very, very important and I say again, we have an unsophisticated audience and crude ads don't reach them and arty ads don't reach them and sometimes we just don't know how to reach them if we have a picture that we think that they will enjoy. But the title or the advertising or something doesn't appeal to them. People always know, because we can open a picture in Fresno, Los Angeles, and Phoenix on the same day and it will be big in all three or it will be dead in all. Now there *may* be local differences. Pictures with a Mexican background do better in Phoenix than most places, or in Los Angeles. For several years we made consistently high grosses on horror combinations and science-fiction combinations and the gimmick combinations, but these things sooner or later run their course. The latest fad, in our theaters at least, was the beach-party films, the young kids at the beach with the surfboards, and we did tremendously on the first two or three, but it's pretty difficult to do more than a few things on a surfboard and it's pretty difficult to get any different-looking young fellows and young girls, bikinis can't get much skimpier, the boys can't get much more rugged-looking, and the kids get tired of it and the old people do. And ever since I've been in this business we've had the cycle thing. This goes back years.

The James Bond things will run their course. Abbott and Costello were the hottest names in the picture business for a year or two and then they trailed off. The first Bond picture, which I think was the best one so far, *Dr. No,* did a fair business, the next one did better, repeat runs were good on the picture, and on *Goldfinger* the roof blew off. Everybody decided that now was the day that they wanted to see James Bond. *Thunderball* is coming out this Christmas

and it's a guessing game. I am inclined to think it will do less than *Goldfinger* and I would say that the Bond picture released in 1968 and 1969 will not be in the same league with *Goldfinger*. But you just don't know.

I think what has killed or severely hurt the horror pictures is the overdose of this kind of stuff on television. Every night the little kids are looking at the monsters to the point where they're not afraid of the monsters anymore. Now we're running through a cycle where there are some very big grosses as the pictures get a little more nudity and a little more risque situations. But this again, they will get up to their ears with it and it will tail off.

We run just about every picture of any merit that is released except pictures that we think are completely unacceptable to our people, like the very sexy foreign pictures, and the nudist pictures. We didn't play *Mary Poppins* (this is the one important picture in the last year or so); we haven't played it because of several reasons, one of which was the way they released the picture, another was their insistence that we charge for children and we just have made up our minds that we're not going to run any picture where we have to charge for children. We get our patrons in on all our junk . . . so why stick them on something good?

We played *The Collector* in Fresno and we thought we were going to drop dead with it and we did very good business. And based on that we're booking it here. Now in Fresno we played it with *The Great Escape*. We're playing that here. We had a combination that did business; we don't know if it's a combination or *The Collector* alone, and we don't want to take any chances. This way we know we're right, we have a program that is playing right. You try to eliminate as much as possible, in any business, as much risk as you can. This is why before somebody will launch a new cigarette nationwide they will try it in one or two areas. We try as much as possible before we commit ourselves to the unknown quantities; a *Collector*, a monster program, a horror program, a teenage program without names. We try in advance to play it in a town like Phoenix, or in Fresno, or in Portland, because if it drops dead there, we've only dropped dead in one drive-in. Drive-ins in this metropolitan area are bigger and more expensive to build and to operate and have far greater grossing possibilities, so then we feel much safer.

We don't dignify this with any term like market research. Sure, once in a while a picture will do well in one of these towns and here will do comparatively poorly. We try to control it as much as possible. We will not permit the distributor or the producer to go into these towns and dynamite the campaign by intensive additional gimmicks in the advertising campaign or by pouring double the normal amount of advertising money in.

Programming

In the drive-ins we insist on running two feature films even if it's a four-hour feature like *Ben-Hur*. We start our shows in the off-daylight-savings-time at 6:30. This is our policy. The people know they can come to the theater at 6:30 and it's open and the show starts. It starts with a cartoon and then the feature. In the wintertime we play the second feature first, which puts our main feature on normally between 8 and 8:30. By that time we feel the majority of the people who want to come to the show are in the theater and they don't have to come in at the middle of a picture. And we think that this is very important, more so than ever today because the people are accustomed by television to seeing everything from the start. In the old days when movies were a family thing, you came in the middle of the picture and it didn't make much difference. But pictures today have more content than they had; they're not as stereotyped; stories are deeper today than they used to be, so we think this is very important. We do the same thing in our walk-ins. We have the Pantages here now. We have Cinerama—the dome, on Sunset Boulevard, is ours. We have the Picwood Theater, the Paradise, the Encino out in the Valley, Reseda, Rolling Hills, we have some theaters in Long Beach. We have theaters in Honolulu. As for foreign films, we didn't show 8½ because of its content. We play

very few foreign pictures. *That Man from Rio* did miserably; a miserable picture. We have played a number of the Italian dubbed pictures. When *Hercules* was released, I think it was the biggest picture we played that summer, at the box office. Today, these things are a drag on the market. With very few exceptions, we won't even play them as a second. Steve Reeves now is a second-picture star.

The Audience

It's a very funny thing about the James Bonds. The first James Bond picture did its best business in the class neighborhoods, where people read books. Now I doubt very much whether the majority of our people read a book in a year. I just don't believe it . . . of any kind. These are people who possibly went through high school and who were not literate, no literary bent, probably went through on C's and D's. They are working in factories and in jobs that do not require high intelligence. They're good, the American middle class, the good substantial backbone of the country—the overwhelming majority of the people . . . the people that Lincoln, you know the thing, "God must have loved the common man because he made so many of them." These are not the people who live in Belair, or Westwood or Menlo Park or Palo Alto. These are not the people who attend the eastside theaters in New York. These people drive 30, 40 miles to work so that they can live in a nice little house in the San Fernando Valley and give their children the kind of place they didn't have when they were growing up. They're up to their ears in mortgage debt, they buy the houses for nothing down and $400 down and $500 down and they pay their bills religiously but are 14 days late on the mortgage because of necessity. These aren't the foreign-car purchasers, these are the people who buy Ford and Chevrolet and Plymouth and to them they are the only cars that are made. The great majority of these people . . . a great many of them, this is the high spot of their week, attending a theater. These are people who make . . . look, don't forget your average factory salary today is maybe $103, $105 per week, something in that neighborhood. Now when you take off the withholding tax, you take off the living expenses, there is damn little left for entertainment. And they've bought a television, they're either paying on it or they have paid for it . . . now television has all novelties worn off. A year, year and a half after they have the TV it's "I like it, but Tuesday nights there's nothing on, Friday nights there's nothing on." And if you look at television, Friday and Saturday nights are their miserable program nights. And these are the nights that these people can go out and they have two and three and four kids and the husband comes home Friday and she says we're going to get out of this damn house tonight or I'm going to jump out the window. She has the kids around all week, especially in the summer. Now Saturday is the day and Sunday is the day when the husband does not have to get up at 7 or 7:15 to go to his job and here is a place where, if they have two or three kids, for $2.50 or for $2.00 or for even less in some areas they can go and they can be entertained for four or five hours and if it's summertime they can go there at 7 or 7:30 and the kids play. We have playgrounds in all the theaters, we have swings and slides and things for them. We close the playground when the show starts, but for half an hour or an hour adults can sit in a car or sit on a bench near where the kids are and the kids are having a ball and they sit there and some of them bring box lunches with them, or buy in our snack bars—you know we have big elaborate snack bars in these theaters. Some of them, I'm sure, bring in a six-pack of beer, and it's a big evening. And it's inexpensive and they see the same picture that they could have spent $2.50 or $3.50 or $5.00 to see. So these are the people that are the backbone of our business, and they're not interested in art forms. They don't know from nothing about art forms and they care less.

However, their taste is getting more sophisticated. Ten years ago *Tom Jones* could not have been released in the United States. No major company would have released it; I don't think anybody would have. And if theaters had been playing it, in a number of areas, their licenses

would have been revoked and they would have been raided. Now this is true in books too. How long ago was it that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was given an okay to be sold in this country. There is a general broadening of what is acceptable today.

I haven't seen *The Loved One* yet. I don't think it's going to get a nickel any place. Possibly in some northern areas. On a picture like *The Loved One* we will have had ample performances before it's ever offered here. Because the picture obviously will be sold through one theater in Los Angeles and a number of spots and it will go to San Francisco, and when a picture opens in San Francisco it's made available to Fresno, so we will get a performance without trying. You asked me would I insist on a performance. Now you're back in the power department. *The Loved One* will be released by Metro; Metro is one of our very important suppliers and I may get my arm twisted. Here again it's against the law for a distributor to condition the sale of one film upon another. Well, that's the law and it's theoretically correct but God help me if I try to work on that basis because I just won't get some of their other pictures that are really good. I'm not arguing for or against it, it's just one of the facts of life.

Advertising

The way advertising works in Los Angeles is that the distributor decides he will spend say $15,000 on advertising a picture in Los Angeles. Of which $6,000 will go to newspapers, $6,000 on television, $2,000 on radio, and so on. And each theater in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, that you see in the ads of the theaters, he contributes X dollars to the campaign. We have taken a position, because sometimes some of these people go completely crazy on the amounts they want to spend, we have set a maximum per theater and if the distributor wants to spend $25 or $35,000 and up to $50,000, we will not go over that maximum which we'll contribute when they spend $13,000 or $14,000. The way film deals work, the distributor gets the major part of the extra money that comes in on a picture.

I think an outstanding example of what you can do with advertising is the picture *Poor White Trash* a couple of years ago. Now this was a picture that was made seven or eight years ago called *Bayou*. It was a second feature. UA released it and got no returns. The man who had made the picture got it back, the releasing deal was over. He recut it a little bit, put in a couple of sensational scenes and made a new advertising campaign and used a couple of trick words, spent a barrel of money, and it was one of the biggest pictures we played in our theaters that year. And this was solely because of a well-conceived and well-executed campaign with a gimmick: "Positively no one under 16 permitted in the theater, policemen on duty who will turn cars away with children." The parents would say we "Want to bring our . . ." "I'm sorry, you can't do it." The picture was horrible, but they said, by God, we tried to go in that theater last night with our kids and they wouldn't let us in and it really must be something. They were burned, the picture was terrible. We don't do this very often. But we played this the first week in December when normally we would be empty and we were full. So, people do a lot of things for money that they shouldn't do. It's like the Madison Avenue advertising man who is working on a campaign on cigarettes and he knows that as a result of his work he may be causing 100 or 1,000 people 15 years from now to get lung cancer. It's like Oppenheimer working on the atom bomb. When he is torn in every direction and he . . . finally something impels him to do it and it's generally money. Not always, but generally.

Reviews

If reviews meant anything we wouldn't play a number of the pictures we play, because these are the ones that are ridiculed and ripped up and down. Our public pays no attention whatsoever. And the pictures that come in heralded by great reviews frequently go flat on their butt. I don't think reviews mean anything in our theaters and, actually, with the exception of art pictures in New York City, I don't think they mean much any place. We feel that there are

four prime advertising media that mean anything to us. One is the trailers of coming attractions which we run in our theaters. Obviously everyone who sees it is a prospective patron because we know they come to our theaters; they're there now. We have to be, we feel, in the newspapers because this is something that is there for reference. We feel that if people decide to go to a show tonight they frequently look in the newspaper to see what's playing. We think that television is very important because of its tremendous impact, the immediacy that it has. And radio—because of the amount of driving that people do especially here in Southern California; anyone who comes to a drive-in obviously is going to have an automobile, and probably has a radio in it. Now we have taken some polls, we've had research organizations from colleges for a course, and also, of course, we have our marquee advertising and most of our theaters are on well-traveled streets and highways and put on there the stars and the time the show starts. But we feel that television and trailers are our most important selling means.

Word of mouth determines how long a picture runs. This is essentially the most important because you can open two pictures the same day and get approximately the same gross, then by Sunday night one may be doing 25%, 35% better. So it is obvious people do talk about movies. In a great many areas people read about movies.

It's not an exact science. We're not in the kind of business where we're dealing in tangibles to a great extent. It's not like making shoes, where you know if you make a thousand pair of shoes and its costs you so much in the way of overhead and if you can sell them at this price, this is going to be your profit. When we open on Wednesday, we don't have any idea what we're going to do.

Concessions

We have, as you have observed if you have ever been in a drive-in, we have ample concessions stands. All theaters have them today. It's quite obvious that this is a commercial enterprise and they're important in that they turn in a good revenue. This is different than the picture business. We know who we're paying for it, we know if we sell so many, we make so many dollars. Here again we try . . . we don't charge as much in our drive-in theaters as in the walk-ins. For the people paying $2.50 admission the extra few pennies don't mean anything. We are dealing with generally a lower-income bracket and we try not to charge all the traffic will bear. We could raise the prices on some of our items. Now we've had big discussions on it, but we think that for essentially selfish purposes that in the long run we're better off trying to let the people get stuff at a price they can afford to pay. Now this is a business decision, the same as we could get higher admission in a number of our theaters than we are getting.

Drive-In Costs

Well, it's less expensive than running a theater, a Chinese Theater or the Pantages Theater because if you're on Hollywood Boulevard, the value of land is such that your rent or the price you have to pay for the theaters is expensive. Without the land, you're talking about $500- or $600,000. And the land, when you need 15, 20 acres in good areas, is very expensive. Where we were able to buy land at decent prices, the company bought the land. We have leased land, we have ground leases, we have theaters that we lease entirely, both walk-ins and drive-ins. This is no different than a company like Fox National General or ABC Paramount. But the drive-in can gross more than any theaters with the exception of the large, first-run theaters in the biggest cities. A drive-in in Anaheim can gross as much as a drive-in can in Los Angeles or New York. There is no such thing as an average gross. It depends on the theater and the town. We have drive-ins that have grossed over $25,000 in a week. Not very often. We have theaters where the highest gross we've ever had is $1,600. The minimum can be nothing, or $5 or $50. When we have fog, we have no income. If we have torrential rain, our gross is cut to practically nothing. If we have a thick fog, the picture doesn't reach the screen from the pro-

jection room. Then we have to either refund the money or give the people fog-checks. If we have rain and only one car shows up, we run the entire show because we want people to say that Pacific is open all the time. We have had a $2.00 gross in an evening in one theater.

Pressure Groups

Pressures from groups are getting less and less. If you would try to book a Charlie Chaplin picture today, you would still get intense pressure from the American Legion and all the right wingers. There has been, from time to time, some pressure from the far left. I don't think it has any material effect. Again, we try to be careful of what we run. We would certainly not want to run any picture that we felt was out-and-out Communist propaganda or out-and-out propaganda for a John Birch Society or Ku Klux Klan. Our patrons are the moderates, the middle class.

Improvements

The business could be improved, in the obvious sense, by better pictures, and more of them, pictures with more box-office appeal, not quality, see. When I talk about a good picture or a bad one, I'm talking about money. As for old films, I have taken a position that I will not play anything in our theaters that has been shown on television. First, because the very few times this has happened by accident in an area where we didn't know it had been shown, we got a number of complaints, and I think rightfully so. I don't know how it would affect the box office and I don't propose to try because here again you're into a money area. We are competing with television for pictures. We play a number of reissues and reruns and after the distributor or the owner of the picture has gotten as much money as he can gouge out of television for it, I don't see why we should dump our money on top of it to make that a more attractive route for him. We want to persuade him to sell pictures to the theater. I think that the impact of television is gradually waning. But I will tell you something. You have no idea the number of people who apparently look at television all the time. The biggest box-office weekend in the motion-picture business that I can recall was the weekend after the Kennedy assassination, when the people came just in droves. Because they couldn't see regular television programs they got out of their houses. This was true all over the United States. There may have been two reasons. Maybe one was just "Let's get the hell out, this is driving us crazy." But I think the big thing was that they couldn't see their normal garbage. But this is true. Television is here and you can't eliminate it. It's like saying, would the smog go away if the automobiles weren't here. Well, the automobiles are here and we have to live with them and you have to learn to live with . . . whether you like it or not, whether you agree or disagree, you have a situation in Viet Nam, and you have a this and a that, and you have to accommodate your life to reality, and television is here.

In any event, the big reason for the surge today in theater attendance and theater building and everything is the boom, the war-baby boom. Young people. You see, people over 50 or over 40 generally are not motion-picture fans. And I can tell you why, because I got there and I'm over 50: you've seen almost everything in these two or three or four years and it's rubbage. . . . If you mature as a person should, a lot of things that were very, very important even in your forties get less important. You begin to agree with F. Scott Fitzgerald about the bitch goddess of success . . . I mean this stuff, because you say the power and the glory and you see the people who've attained it and you see what's happened to them, and this is what drives, I guess, a lot of people to religion because they despair and they say there doesn't seem to be any reason for it.

THE ART THEATER

MAX LAEMMLE *is the owner of the leading independent art house in the Los Angeles area.*

Background

Originally, after having finished high school in Germany, I went into my father's oil business for two or three years. At that time I met with my uncle, the famous Carl Laemmle, who was the founder and president of Universal Films. And I was mostly anxious to know languages. So I said if I could work in Paris, I would love to join you. After having been in Paris only a few days, he called me from London and said he would like me to stop in London, I want you to perfect your English and I will later on have you come to the United States to give you further training there, etc., and painted me a very rosy picture of my future possibilities with him. I convinced my father to let me go and went to London for six months of training. By that time I spoke English well enough and then he had me come to New York, from where I was sent as a student salesman for a few months to Montreal.

Then I went for six months to Hollywood, where I got training in the studio in all kinds of things. But mostly in distribution. At that time I was considered ready and was sent to Europe, where I was travelling all over as Carl Laemmle's personal representative, reporting on Universal Films distribution. After having done that for about a year, which gave me vast experience and a fairly intimate knowledge of the European markets, the manager in Paris quit and I was appointed to that job, with supervision of Belgium, Spain and Portugal. I was barely 24 then. I gradually became District Manager for Europe, and had seven or eight offices under my jurisdiction.

That lasted about four years but I had a falling out with Carl Laemmle and went into business for myself. I went into the export business, where I sold French films all over the world. But I had a great hankering for California. My brother and I decided if we could find a good theater there we would buy it. He was from Chicago, with a theater in Lowell, Indiana. I was still living in Paris, was already married, had a little son. This was shortly after Munich and I still had my parents in Germany and I was very anxious to get them out. So, I was anxious to get out here and I was very fortunate that things worked out. We bought our first theater here which was the Franklin theater in Highland Park. Now I have three theaters but I lease out one and I'm actively managing and conducting the affairs of only the Los Feliz in Hollywood and the Esquire in Pasadena with my son Robert.

Also, as you know, I have completely changed over from general exhibition to the rather special field of fine art and foreign films. And, I'm very happy and I'm enjoying it tremendously and feel extremely fortunate in respect that I'm able to make a living out of an activity which I so thoroughly enjoy.

Two principal factors prompting that decision were: (1) The very stiff competition that

PHOTO: LAURIE MILLER

existed for Hollywood films; there were always at least four theaters competing for product, which was in short supply and everybody wanted these films first run in the area. (2) Even then my familiarity with European product prompted me every so often to book an outstanding foreign show rather than book a poor Hollywood show and this happened more and more frequently with success. I started this as long as 15 years ago. The film *Circle of Love,* which is a remake of *La Ronde,* brought back very vivid memories of my first showing of *La Ronde,* which was about 15 years ago. When I first saw *La Ronde* I liked it very much but my reaction was, "Gosh, I would never be able to show that in my Los Feliz Theatre." It was then strictly a family theater, a neighborhood theater, I was very conscious of the family trade. But about a year or a year and a half later I did work up enough courage to show it and it was a big success. I held it for three weeks which was unheard-of then and did quite well with it.

Work

At about 9:30 or 10:00 my working day begins and I'm working usually all day, mostly phone calls. I sit on the phone, read my mail, sit on the phone, and plan my booking, my advertising. It has to be ordered, it has to be planned, it has to be brought to the papers or the paper sent to pick it up, and so on. My own personal part in the business is mostly the negotiations for the films. It's the most complicated and the most intricate part of the business because the film business has always been rather one-sided. The distributor has the upper hand because the supply is shorter than the demand, especially if you want the good films. And that goes, of course, just as much for the foreign as for the American films.

I work at the theater mostly on the busy weekend nights. I've gotten in the habit of staying up late at night because I sometimes stay until closing or else I do a lot of reading at night and I'm not interrupted by phone calls. I book my programs from a very personal point of view. I have always enjoyed the good things in these films and I have always made it a point to show if possible only films that I like and enjoy, that I could show with a certain amount of pride and justification. Of course, I cannot always say that my own personal liking is *always* the determining factor. Very often I'm a little bit unsure about how much I like a film and other opinions have a certain influence on my decisions. If I find that a film is generally considered worthy and has received approval, it may be an influence on my own decision. But on the other hand, I have enjoyed sometimes asserting my own judgment by showing a film which has not received general approval. Take films like, among the American-made ones, *On the Bowery, Come Back Africa, The Cool World.* Among the foreign ones, *Web of Passion [Leda],* and films like *The Naked Autumn, Friends for Life.* I'll be showing *Before the Revolution* and *Salvatore Giuliano.*

You see when I choose a film, and even though I may have serious questions in my own mind about its commercial potential, I do every thing I know how and can do to make it successful. This is where I think our strength lies. We prepare campaigns very studiously and very carefully and we map out ads, stories, programs for mailing, etc. Thus we have established ourselves with educational institutes and with student publications. I think it is this totality of our effort that makes a success out of certain films which really hadn't been successful elsewhere. I believe that by forewarning the public and preparing the public for something unusual they will not only accept it better but will enjoy it better; they will talk about it to their friends and if enough people do that, this can make the difference between success and failure. I very rarely show films I do not like and offhand I couldn't even think of one case where I have done it . . . no, I can think of one, *Julie the Redhead,* a French film. I didn't like that. I bought it on the strength of some excellent New York reviews that I found in the press book and on the strength of a couple of jolly nice performances, but as a whole I did not like it, and it was a miserable flop. It was awful. But maybe this has also to do with the fact that I went into it without any conviction. It was to fill a

hole—we had a week open and there was nothing else available so I took it. It wasn't a bad film but it certainly wasn't anything worthwhile and it was nothing I could sell with confidence. I did like *Shot in the Dark* although I was fully aware that it is not really an art film. I felt that it had sufficient style and professional creativeness and sufficient entertainment value in a good sense, you know, that it wasn't cheap entertainment, but really the kind of entertainment that everybody could enjoy.

Obtaining Films

Being in the business, of course, I usually know who handles what. Most films are represented by local distributors. If they are not, then it immediately becomes a problem because most of the time the New York distributor is reluctant to deal with us directly because he wants to make a distribution deal with a local distributor. But we have ever so often made deals directly with New York.

I know about a certain film having read about it, not only about its quality but also about the fact that it has opened in New York so I know it is now officially available. There is absolutely no way of getting films unless the U.S. rights have been bought by some importer-distributor. Very often, of course, I know about the worthwhile films from reading periodicals. And the trade papers, like *Variety*, report about the festivals and so on, and about new showings that were either critical or commercial successes in Europe, even without festival prizes.

To give you an example of the process, take *Red Desert*. I wanted it very badly, ever since I learned that it was available in New York. When I first contacted the distributor in New York he said he would soon come here and contact me when he gets here and probably it would be distributed through a firm here called Emerson Films. I called Emerson and they knew nothing about it. They didn't even know yet that they would definitely be going to handle the film. They were not sure yet. So about 2 months later the distributor from New York was out here and he gave me a ring and we had a talk and he said I won't be able to send the print until probably July. Well, we are close to July and the print hasn't arrived yet. And I haven't yet seen *Red Desert*. Meantime, however, Emerson Films is definitely the distributor; they want a big guarantee and they don't say how much, they just say you have to come up with lots of money before and how much are you willing to offer? So I said how can I talk to you about figures without seeing the film? He said well I'm sorry I can't show it to you, I haven't got a print yet. On the other hand, he threatens that Rosener is willing to buy the film. Which is possibly true because Rosener has a circuit of about seven or eight theaters out here on the West Coast and has a representative in New York, who reports to him and who negotiates for him. So he has the jump on us at times. [Ed. Note. *Red Desert* ran for two rather unsuccessful weeks at another theater; Laemmle played it later, and more successfully, double-billed with *The Eclipse*.]

Just about the same story happened to *La Peau Douce*. The distributor wanted a big guarantee and also they wanted early playing time, which we didn't have because we were booked up in our theaters with some other commitments. They didn't want to wait. Also, there again, the Cinema, which is owned by a big chain, they have a buyer in New York. That buyer is right at the source. Also he has the advantage of being able to offer an outlet of more than 30 theaters, it's closer to 40 now. So, they can guarantee to book a film into many of their theaters and they probably do that ever so often. So the thing of difficulty for us is to get the so-called important films; important mostly from a point of view of box-office. The films that come with a big reputation the circuits are likely to get before us because of the powerful competition these circuits like Fox West Coast, the Art Theater Guild or the Rosener circuit, can offer. Anyway the so-called big picture is very bitterly fought for.

We did get *Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. Maybe they didn't fully realize that that picture did have great potential commercially and maybe they were a little bit afraid of such a film, sung from beginning to end, and quite unusual. . . . I

was very lucky. We played it very successfully for six weeks.

Not always is competition so keen. I saw *Muriel* at the invitation of United Artists in a screening room with their manager, sales manager, and two or three salesmen and bookers, plus about four or five exhibitors. Everybody was completely bewildered and puzzled by the film . . . I mean all of the United Artists gang just thought it was a big joke. They didn't know what it was all about. We later showed it as part of a French Film Series which was successful. Our innovation of a film series does not give extra bargaining power with distributors, except it affords me the possibility of sometimes buying a film which hardly anybody else wants, but which I can make a success within the context of a series.

The distributors have various ways of dealing. If they have a big winner, they usually want what is called front money. That means a guarantee in money, which can range up to $20,000 or even much more. A film like *La Dolce Vita* at the time got a $75,000 guarantee for first run in Los Angeles. In the competitive war the distributor usually doesn't tell you I want so much of a guarantee. He asks how much will you guarantee? You will never know in the end if he doesn't play one against the other. There's no assurance of that; in fact, everybody does; everything points to it.

Sometimes we offer, sometimes the distributor demands, and most of the time it is a matter of bargaining and finally agreeing on the terms. For instance, for the top features most of the time they want a percentage of box-office gross but quite frequently we will buy a film flat, sometimes for a very high price. Usually the exhibitor prefers to buy flat because then he is completely the master of his decisions. He can decide how much to spend on advertising, or not to spend, and he doesn't have to render any accounting, which is time-consuming because when you have an agreement whereby the distributor participates in advertising you have to substantiate how much you spend. You can't just tell him I spent $1,000. You have to bring in invoices and tear sheets and records and accounting and these figures are usually not available until several weeks after the engagement has ended because only then you get all your billings together and this is a very time-consuming and to me odious job to do. Whenever I can I like to get away from that; it's very unproductive. So, for that reason, plus for the reason that usually we come out better, I prefer to buy a film flat if I can. But most of the time the distributor will not sell flat. If he thinks he has a film that is likely to do well he will insist on a percentage. The second feature is usually bought at a firm price . . . $100, $200 or whatever their price may be, that is being deducted off the gross, off the top of the gross and also, of course, federal taxes are deducted. From then on he participates in every dollar. Now very often the percentage is subject to what is called a "sliding scale." That means, the more we gross the higher our percentage becomes. The percentage is applied according to a scale which relates to the amount of money we take in for a week and as the gross goes up, so does the percentage, from the first dollar on—meaning if we gross low the percentage may be as low as 25%. If we do very well, the percentage may be as high as 50% and, in some cases, on a blockbuster like *Tom Jones* there are deals where the percentage is as high as 70%, from the first dollar up.

More and more now the large distributors are interested in acquiring foreign films. They do it for various reasons. There has been at times a shortage of product and they can handle these films with very little extra effort. But I believe they have financial interests very often in the making of these films. They, for instance, coproduce in France, for purposes of quota productions: they have to have a certain number of French films in order to be able to distribute so many American films. Also they have an eye on the whole world market. Such a film is being produced with an eye not only on say France or America, but with an eye on the market in Europe and Asia and South America and so on. Because most of these films have distribution all over the world. And so you find that Metro is actually co-producing films in France and distributing them all over the world.

Programming

This is a double-bill territory, meaning that as long as all of the competition is doing it we have to do it. The only exception are those few theaters that are able to get the top attractions. Yet very often they don't do well and the reason very often is that their single attraction is not strong enough. Or they don't present them with enough dedicated work that bridges the gap between the exhibitor and the public. I have a whole file on good shorts that I would love to play and I refer to it when the need arises. Most shorts are being made available through distributors and others are merely seen at one-night showings at UCLA or so, and are not available in distribution, actually. There are lots of good shorts on the market, but the so-called artistic shorts are very little in demand and the distributor who handles them knowing that there is only a very limited demand usually out-prices himself because of his realization that only a few bookings can be hoped for and, therefore, those few bookings have to bring in as much money as possible. This is a vicious circle, so very often some of the good shorts are so hard to get because of the impossible demands of the distributor that they are laying around. Certain excellent shorts have hardly had any bookings because of the price. For instance, *Chagall* probably would have had a much wider distribution if it hadn't been for the high demands. We paid for that, when we first showed it, as much as we pay for a feature film. It was probably worth it. We showed Trinka's feature-length film *Midsummer Night's Dream* first run. We're one of only two local theaters that showed that film—and flopped with it, by the way.

Pressures

My only brush with pressure groups was when in a few instances we wanted the support of the Catholic Church in this area when we showed a series of children's matinees during summer and at another time when we showed a film which I consider a semi-art film, called *The Reluctant Saint* and which I thought was a well-done film, not a great one, but interesting and done with creative imagination that I enjoyed. And the natural thing was to bring it to the attention of the church groups in this area so they could give support, which only the Catholic Church refused, and I became aware of the fact that the Catholic Church in this area considers our theater as "persona non grata" because we have at times shown films that were on the condemned list. I don't know which ones. They never told me . . . they never made any specific reproaches or accusations or anything. The main thing is that we may show a very adult film, let's say *Odd Obsession*, the Japanese film, which is one of the most outspoken I would say, or shocking if you want to use that word, except that it is highly creative and done with a great deal of taste and imagination; at least that's the way I felt about it. But we had no problems; there were no complaints, there were no attempts on the part of any youngsters or teenagers to go and sneak in. We don't have that problem. It is quite amazing to me that we are never faced with that problem, that young ones and under aged would try to come see these films. We never had a brush with the police nor did we ever have any pressure actually. We did have a couple of anonymous complaints at the beginning when we started to show foreign films but they were mostly the chauvinistic type of comments: Why don't you show Hollywood films; isn't our product good enough?

The only time that I did seriously consider the problem of self-censorship was several years ago at the time when I wanted to show *Limelight* very badly and Charlie Chaplin just around that time had gotten into serious trouble with the government, for being a foreigner and leftist and so on. And I made several announcements from the stage at the time and asked the public for a show of hands whether they felt that we should show *Limelight* adding that we will not participate in any political controversy or take any side on politics but merely as a creative work by a genius that was recognized the world over as such. The showing of hands was overwhelmingly in favor and from then on I had many letters saying "Why haven't you shown it, you seemed to make such a valiant effort and so on, why haven't you come through?" In the

end the deal was rejected by Chaplin and he withdrew the film from the market.

I would not show *Blood of the Beasts* only because the film is so cruel . . . put it this way, it would be very hard to take for most of the customers as I see it and I feel that it is just too much to endure. Now to some extent I have those same misgivings about *Night and Fog* and yet I would like to show it much more eagerly than *Blood of the Beasts.* I don't think it's "entertaining" and yet it is a very important film. I think it should be seen both because of the way it's made and because of the way it deals with that particular subject. And I still hope someday I will show it. [*Ed. Note:* He did, in the context of a Tribute to Alain Resnais program.]

Critics and Reviewers

Let's put it in a general way. There is usually no solid agreement even among the highly reputed critics. Therefore, I have never felt any allegiance to any one critic whose opinion I would respect to such a degree that he is the judge for me. I do look to the critics generally and a film that has received high critical acclaim has to me that much of an advantage. Mostly, I would say, the magazines, but also the newspapers. *Time, The New Yorker,* the *New Republic, Life* and then, of course, the periodicals, *Film Quarterly, Sight and Sound, Films and Filming,* and so on. Their consensus has a great deal of, I wouldn't even say influence but meaning to me. Mostly they supply me with ammunition. They inform me about the film and its styles and what some people think of it or how they interpret it and they give me the possibility to quote them and they also give me food for thought which permits me in turn to write program notes. No question about it that when I write program notes I do it after study of what other people wrote.

The paper that counts most here seems to be the *L. A. Times.* When a good *Times* review appears, and especially with a good headline, or let's say a rave review, it is noticeable at the box-office. I don't think it matters terribly much who writes it. But Kevin Thomas is the only one who really has made himself a niche as far as reviewing foreign films are concerned. Nobody else has done it nearly as consistently (nor with as much dedication) during the last couple of years. Now when Phil Scheuer for instance reviewed *Muriel* badly it did not seem to hurt it. This seems to be a contradiction of what I said a moment ago. But it really isn't, because when a film like *Muriel* comes along which enjoyed quite a reputation with the people who know about this type of film, then nothing will detract them. They want to see that film and if they like it they will talk about it. It is an important enough film that this will overcome a bad review. But on the other hand, for instance, *Naked Autumn* which was practically unknown, even by the "In" crowd, very few people knew about it, nor did they know about its director, François Leterrier, whose first film this was, so there was very little to justify any hope for public acceptance of this film at the box office. We had an outstanding review in the *Times* written by Kevin Thomas and the film took off on opening day. But there is also praise which can be damaging, such as that a film is slow or deliberate or documentary or highly informative. What I do miss on the local scene is more editorial comment on films as an art. The local press seems to consider films only in terms of Hollywood's, editorially. Films in terms of an industry and a commerce. Very few writers write on films as an art. They very rarely write on creative artists, their style, on the trends of film-making, on the interrelationship of the various influences and the creative trends in various countries. No attention is paid to those things. The press is underestimating the caliber of its readers if it does not discuss film as an art. We have actually requested and at times obtained very fine cooperation when we launched some of our new series. We have requested that the series should be discussed as a series, the way we approach it. And they have, maybe shorter than we would have liked, but they *have* commented on the series and on our approach and a few have done it in an interesting way. What is the theme of the series, what is the approach of the series, how we try to attract a more dedicated and faithful audience by the series approach and so on, and how we are

able to present, and rather successfully at times, a film which otherwise would have very little commercial chance, by presenting it within the context of the series. But they had to be prodded to do so, they had to be convinced to do so, they had to be sold on the merits of such writing. What I find lacking is the spontaneous appearance of articles from writers of stature, that might have something to say about film as an art . . . which it is.

Audience

The easiest way to try to analyze our audience is on the basis of our mailing list. However, that only shows us one thing, that an overwhelming majority are *Times* readers. We ask for comments and recommendations and we know that a lot of them are foreign movie fans . . . they know what they are talking about. We know that geographically our audience is not at all limited to our immediate surroundings, but on the contrary they come from amazing distances. We have mailings from ranges of 50 to 100 miles or more and quite a few of them. We attract, amazingly enough, many many people from Beverly Hills and even Santa Monica and so on. They come even from Long Beach at times. Some of them say they come into town just to see the show, and they are all ages. We do have on a Saturday night more the dating age, the young adult crowd, but on a weekday night we have more of the mature and even sometimes rather old people. When we have a French series we get quite a lot of French people, but not nearly 50% of our audience is ever of the ethnic source. The biggest draw film we showed was *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, and *Two Daughters* was one of the worst.

Summer used to be, years ago, a bad season. Nowadays summer can be a very good season because of the absence of high-caliber TV programs. When there is a big TV event, such as the Academy Awards, or an important Presidential speech or a major political campaign, then everybody's box-office is hurt. Maybe ours less than that of the more general type of theaters, who play Hollywood products. I think our audience is less susceptible to be attracted by political events or a major boxing match or things like that. Even on Academy Awards night our attendance is sometimes surprisingly good if we have a good attraction but usually we feel it very strongly.

Television showing of foreign films will have an effect. I don't know how much. I've heard of cases where films have been shown after TV showing and still were a success but we have had one or two bad experiences. We would not deliberately show as our main feature a film that had been on TV. But we might choose a second feature that had been on TV. Now I don't know whether *Citizen Kane* was ever on TV but about two years ago we used it as a companion feature to *Come Back Africa*. I did it very deliberately for the purpose of adding strength to the box-office because I felt *Come Back Africa* needed that kind of support and I was anxious that *Come Back Africa* should be successful and that many people should see it. And *Citizen Kane* did accomplish that purpose. We had a good three-week engagement of that double bill.

We are gaining constantly new people, a new public that is interested in foreign films and that wasn't before. How this happens we don't know. Most of the time somebody takes somebody else and says let's go and see it and one knows what he is doing and the other maybe doesn't and if by chance it happens to be something he halfway enjoys maybe he tries it again and gradually becomes interested. Other people approach it as a means of improving their knowledge of language. We have many students when we have the right film. For *Umbrellas of Cherbourg* we had many groups that came with their teachers, as foreign-language students. They came from amazing distances with buses in groups of between 25 and 50 and made reservations in advance and arrangements for special student rates and told us how much they enjoyed the film and how beautifully the French language was recorded and pronounced in this film . . . which was true, it was quite extraordinary. I could understand and enjoy every single word and syllable, that's why it was so very suitable for that purpose.

Expenses

The biggest expense is usually our overhead, our constant overhead which is rent and payroll, and the other big item is advertising and, of course, a very big item is film rental. One can or cannot spend a lot of money advertising and one can and cannot pay a lot of money for film. But the constant, heavy burden is the overhead. In other words, there's always some audience; there's always a few hundred people who will come and see practically anything but if it doesn't cover your overhead, you're caught in a hole. This is the big risk.

There are, of course, two approaches to advertising. One is the approach that you address yourself to what you imagine to be your audience, and you slant your advertising to that audience. If you were talking to somebody you know, you talk to such a person in the language that you know that person will understand and appreciate. But there is the other approach that is to try and gain over an audience that may not necessarily already be your audience. And that other approach is a very costly one. There you address yourself to practically everybody. There is a constant debate in our own minds about which is the right thing to do. It is a waste of money to try such costly means as, for instance, newspaper advertising to the vast readership of a metropolitan newspaper, and try and impress them with what you have to offer. They may not at all be interested in what you have to offer. When our *a priori* audience is really a very limited audience to whom we should talk on their level of language, on their level of interest, on their level of appeal. We do consider it necessary to do a certain minimum of advertising.

We feel that our mailing list is our most important means of publicity. Our customers are very impatient if they don't get their mailing piece from time to time and ask us, well, how come I haven't received anything for so long. And very often we haven't mailed out anything for a long time because the cost of these mailings is quite considerable and we do it only when we have enough material to make up a program. The list is in excess of 10,000. We do our own mailing. We usually get out a mailing for several programs at a time. About four times a year. There's supposedly not any relationship between news column-inches that you receive in a newspaper and the amount of advertising that you do. I'm sure that with some papers there is, but they do not admit it. In other words, some papers will not print a review unless you also advertise. Some papers more openly than others admit such a relationship. In principle let's say the amount of free space that you get, either by reviews or by occasional small articles or by photographs, does not necessarily relate to the amount of space you buy. But again, I say not necessarily.

Improving Business

I believe that very few exhibitors know their products sufficiently well from a point of view of what the films really are. They read about them in the trade papers, they know their box-office takes, they may know a little bit by perusing a press book, which gives you all the information that the distributor has prepared for the publicizing of the picture. But very few view the film and not enough attention is being given to the proper programming . . . how the films will go well together. This is one of the very important factors to me: a program should be somehow compatible, that the things that go into one program should not clash, that the films should somehow have a certain affinity. And, of course, this becomes more important when you make up a series. We try to give a series some common denominator, some content, some idea that we try to underscore and thus give the series meaning.

Concessions

Concessions are important in two senses. It is a service to the audience without any question and it also helps to pay the rent and so on. In the case of drive-ins, it's a major part of the business. In the case of the average theater, it's an important part of the business. In the case of the art theater, it is of very little import as part of the business. In the case of, let's say, a drive-in, a drive-in would never play a single bill.

To them the concessions are very important and they will at all times play a double bill. Even the so-called blockbusters and super-spectacles, they will still double-bill. But to other theaters, the major consideration for double-billing is the box office and not the concessions. As an art theater, we even supply Swiss imported chocolates on sale as well as some of the domestic, and our clientele buys that product more avidly than the rest. And as a little sideline, we sell some of the better cinema magazines and occasionally a book like the one by Pauline Kael, one of the very well-known critics and film writers, and we will occasionally sell a good record album if it relates to what we are playing, as we did in the case of *Umbrellas of Cherbourg.* We sold over 200 records in the two theaters and we will do it again in the case of *Circle of Love,* which has a beautiful score.

The Business

The advent of our fine arts and foreign film policy has been very beneficial and we have grown with this change of policy. Since our remodelling we have had a better theater and since my son Robert has joined me as a full-time partner and co-worker this has given it added strength. There are more art films today and there is possibly a broader market for foreign films and this is constantly on the increase, in spite of some of the negative happenings, such as the Janus debacle, if you want to call it that. [Janus Films, a distributing firm which had made its name with the Ingmar Bergman films, recently went out of the theatrical distribution business.] It merely indicates a shifting of the foreign-film product from the small independent distributor to the larger and sometimes big distributor, you know, such as Joe Levine's Embassy, and Walter Reade-Sterling. Even the major companies, such as 20th Century-Fox and Columbia and United Artists and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, have come into the act and they are handling foreign product and that has put the squeeze on the smaller, independent distributor. So it is not a drying-up of the market altogether. It's merely a shifting. Fox is now distributing Buñuel's *The Diary of a Chambermaid.* Will they make money with it, will they do the film justice? Who knows?

Now about bringing in noncommercial films, Columbia, under their Royal banner, brought over *Salvatore Giuliano* but it is already acknowledged to be a commercial flop. I haven't seen it yet and I don't know whether I will like it or not, but I'm very keenly interested to see it. Columbia probably won't make money with that import from what I know about it now. So they do sometimes venture beyond the orthodox.

I hold to the view that universities or any other nontheatrical shows should be limited to an either educational or to a highly cultural point of view and should not be geared to the emphasis of filling a large auditorium for a big box-office take. Mostly I resent that they take away some of the product that we need. There is a shortage of product and every time that a large showing at Royce Hall at UCLA takes away a film that is going to be available in theatrical distribution, they have taken away the prestige of our showing a first run in this area. And they have taken away some 1900 potential customers. On the other hand, as long as they show films with an educational point of view or when they trace the development of the film as an art by showing a retrospective of great films of the past and thus stimulate an awareness of the art of the film with the student, this is something which we would support and we have supported. When they show a film like *Moderato Cantabile* there is nothing in my opinion that justifies it except that it is a good film; but we like to show good films too—this is our business. We have a big investment, we have a big overhead. Royce Hall has no big investment, they have no big overhead. It is an unfair competition and we will be missing this kind of film for our bookings or else we take a big gamble if we were to book it after they show it. In some cases this gamble may be just an imagination on my part. In other cases films that we showed following Royce Hall were flops, for instance, *Zazie, Two Daughters* and *Paris Belongs to Us.* They were nothing. Others, like *Lady with a Dog,* were successful.

I'm very grateful that our business has pro-

gressed nicely. In fact, I'm in the mood to expand. Our biggest problem is to make people aware of what we have and when we have it. The most frequent comment that I have from my customers is, "Oh, if I had only known that you showed *that,* I wanted to see it so badly!" We use every available means of making it known. We are listed every day in all of the daily newspapers. We take out special ads. We have our mailing list and yet so many people miss a certain film they wanted to see. They procrastinate and they don't come in time. And later on they are sorry. They were potential customers; they wanted to see the film; they knew about the film, and yet they didn't make it in time. How to solve that problem . . . if I knew how to do that I would be a millionaire.

THE NUDIE-CUTIE

SHAN SAYLES, *who studied film at UCLA before going into the exhibition field, operates several nudie-cutie houses but also art theaters and theaters showing regular Hollywood films.*

Background

Ever since I was a kid I was fascinated with advertising and promotion, and I found theaters very enjoyable business. Ever since I can remember I've always wanted to be in the business of bringing entertainment to people or recreation . . . I don't know what you want to call it . . . because we commit an awful lot of things in the name of entertainment. My first job was as an usher at 40¢ an hour in a motion picture theater in Detroit. The pictures that were being exhibited when I went to work were re-issues of *Rebecca* and *Jamaica Inn* and I can remember pictures like *Trio* which became tremendous hits at the box-office, and, of course, that's when coffee first came into the theaters. Actually, I got into the theater business at a very good time because theater business was on its way out and everybody knew it. And, new things were important then.

I don't so much enjoy the administrative end of what I do. As we've grown into a larger company I've had to do things that I normally wouldn't care to and, as a result, I'm now surrounding myself with assistants and employees and I can do what I used to do ten years ago, which was strictly handle promotion of motion pictures and the over-all operation of theaters, new locations, design. Now I'm the president of Continental Theaters, a holding company. Well, it's not really a holding company, it's an administrative company and it administers the buying of motion pictures, the booking of motion pictures, the advertising of them and supervises the management, including all the bookkeeping and what have you, of all the theaters that come under our operation. (Some of the theaters that are handled by this company are theaters that I do not own. We simply handle the administrative end of it.) The company has been very successful since it was formed. I have an associate who handles the distribution business and who acts as the vice president of this firm. Then we have a third partner, who was brought into the company approximately two years ago to handle the real estate acquisition in the development of the theaters.

So, actually, I handle at the present time, or supervise, practically all the fields that I've mentioned. My first love has always been the advertising and promotion of films and public relations, and actually, making the theaters more accepted in the community. We more or less got side-tracked here about three years ago with big profits on the so-called nudie theaters and I've always been waiting for the bottom to fall out, only the bottom doesn't fall out. It seems to be getting stronger and stronger and stronger which has put me in kind of an embarrassing position because I've urged the build-up of the art or new theaters as a means of stopping the gap when the bottom falls out of the nudies. But the nudies, which used to do $3,000 a week, are now grossing $8,000 a week. Some people say there's no accounting for public taste, I say there's always an accounting for public taste.

Films

I like all kinds of films. I suppose the ideal film that I enjoy is probably the film that is both a

critical and a box-office success. For example, *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines* I thought was a good "entertainment," as you people say. I would say *Sound of Music,* while it's a big piece of schmaltz, it's a thoroughly enjoyable piece of entertainment. And critically, it's been fairly well received. Or, a picture like *Mary Poppins* I think is a fine entertainment. Now, I can go right from there to a film like *Moderato Cantabile* and think that this is a masterpiece. And if it's promoted properly I like it even better.

I think we better make it clear that there are three different categories of exploitation pictures and it is very important that you understand that. Number one, there is the so-called exploitation picture.

The exploitation picture proper usually is a film where there is a hard-core story. Many times they are foreign films that have been dubbed for the American market, often French, Finnish, Swedish pictures. There's a picture playing at the Apollo Theater right now called *No Morals* and *The Naked and the Wicked. No Morals,* I don't know what the original French title was, but it's one of Jeanne Moreau's early pictures, and it is a typical exploitation picture. A picture, oh good grief, there's hundreds of them, and we've played them. Just get a newspaper and go through it, most of the films in the Apollo are exploitation pictures. There will be some nudity in the film, but very little. Most of it is the violence type of picture that many times has a sexy story line or something of that type. Normally they're black and white, and normally they do a lot of business. Of course, the primary reason for them has been that they always capture the great revenue in the New York area because nudity, nudist films were not allowed in New York until recently. And the same way in many other parts of the country. Now the floodgates have been opened and I guess you can run just about anything. So, however, the Apollo does nicely on the exploitation picture.

Now the nudist pictures are films that are either supposedly filmed in a nudist camp or are filmed in a nudist camp and they simply

PHOTO: LAURIE MILLER

picture a lot of people walking around with no clothes on, playing volleyball, and all that kind of crap. Now that stuff goes through vogues of popularity. During the thirties we had a picture called *Aletia, the Land of the Sun Worshippers,* that was tremendous, or we had *Nude Valley* or something. During the forties I don't think we had any nudist pictures, in the fifties I don't think so. In the late fifties a picture called *Garden of Eden* was made which was a sensation wherever it played. We made a lot of money on that picture and during the early sixties a picture was made in England called *For Members Only,* which was retitled by us to *The Nudist Story,* which was sensational. It played at the Apollo, I think three months.

However, then we have what we call the nudie pictures, which are pictures like *The Immoral Mr. Teas, Not Tonight Henry,* where there is nudity depicted as part of a story—but an awful lot of nudity with a lot of girls in kind of silly situations. They're usually all in color.

I wouldn't put the 16mm in any category. I say that they are in a category of strictly 16 mm girlie shows. I would put them in the category of arcade movies that you have down on the street or maybe in a nudie category. It would just depend. Some of the pictures we've made for our theaters are in the nudie category.

Theaters

In three of our theaters we run so-called exploitation type pictures. In one of the theaters we run strictly foreign films, from Russia, Poland, Israel, and that theater has turned out to be quite an unusual success. Valley West Theater runs current Hollywood films. The

theater was designed originally to be an art theater. However we found it could operate more profitably with films like *How the West Was Won* and *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* and that's the policy it's now on.

The Vista Continental, when I first took it over in 1959, was the established rat-hole for Russian films on the West Coast. It operated on a three-day-week basis and in the summertime it was closed. The man that operated the theater used to go to Scotland every summer, and that was the end of it. When I took the theater over I remodeled it to some extent and up-dated the run of films. However, we had the thing called the cultural exchange which was perpetrated on the exhibitors and the public in this country and, as a result, all of the Russian pictures were taken away from me and instead of playing in the dumpy Vista were put into the Fine Arts, where they dropped dead. And I used to have to wait six months and then I would play the pictures and still do just as much business. However, for about a six-month period there was a dearth of product for me. So, one day, completely by accident, we booked a picture called *The Immoral Mr. Teas*, and it was booked in against my better judgment. The film turned out to be so successful that it played one year in the Vista and it made so much money that it enabled us to go into other theaters. At the present time, the Vista is probably one of the top money-making theaters in the United States.

The Europa has had kind of a ragged history. Of course, when I took it over the first thing I did was take that wall out between the two theaters and the reason for it was that distributors would not make any films available to us because it was too small. It is still too small; we only have 320 seats. However, when we first operated the theater it was operated as more or less a first-run theater or a re-issue theater. So, eventually we closed the theater, completely revamped the operation, changed the name, and opened it up as the home of Russian film in Los Angeles. From the day it opened it has been profitable. However, we found that there was also a market for Polish pictures in Los Angeles which has been thoroughly overlooked and we put them in too and they proved fairly successful; there's an audience that has to be developed. We've shown many of the Russian so-called classics and we did very well. However, you see, the trouble is that, with the exception of one, the community does not support our theaters, and so we have an up-hill fight all the time. In other words, most of the people, most of the Jewish people who came to the Europa theater to see *Sallah* did not even know there was a theater there. Now that theater has been there for 30 years and they still did not know there was a theater there.

Getting Films

In determining what I'm going to play, I try to more or less run a pulse on the country. I subscribe to 92 newspapers all over the country and I set aside one day a week to do nothing except cull the periodicals which we subscribe to (about 40), and all the newspapers. We take about five international publications. And I try to get an idea not only from the name of the picture but also the advertising campaign, as a basis for what we're going to play. There are certain areas that excel in promotion and exploitation of certain pictures. Frankly, when it comes to a nudie or an exploitation picture, the campaign is just as important as the picture is. And there are certain cities, like Toronto, Miami, and, believe it or not, Columbus, Ohio that have theaters where they have absolutely wonderful advertising campaigns. So, many times what we'll do is simply write a letter and ask that we be permitted to use the campaign. Nine times out of ten they let us do that.

Then, of course, we sometimes get ideas for booking combinations and so forth for our regular commercial theaters. However, that only is as far as the specialized situations go, like the Europa and the exploitation theaters. As far as the other theaters go, where we play established Hollywood products, we are forced to accept the films that are offered to us on the availability that they are offered to us. Everything is by bid arrangement.

A lot of our Russian films come from one dis-

tributor in New York, Artkino Pictures. Now they are unofficially exclusive Russian film distributors in the United States. However, not officially. Anyone can distribute Russian films if they want to. The same goes for Polish pictures. Now I deal with three men that are located, one in Pittsburgh, one in Detroit, one in Chicago, on Polish pictures. They usually go to Warsaw once or twice a year to pick up the films. Most of the films are not acceptable here because they are too colloquial. Many of them are simply not for our Polish audience here. In fact, many times the air-freight bill on these films is much more than they ever earn, because we screen everything we show and all the films are shipped here, they're screened, and then they are approved or rejected. In some respects there are distributors for the so-called nudiecuties. It depends. Certain films have distributors, others don't. You have to buy them directly from New York or from the producer, depending on how important the picture is.

I'll tell you, the nudie market is really an amazingly simple market if you will keep it simple. But too many people want to get arty or they want to get big-business. It amazing how simple it really is. For example, we have two theaters where we have completely eliminated 35mm pictures. This nudie craze, of course, it's been with us for 50 years, but right now it's so old it's new. We have gone right back to the peep shows of 50 years ago; that's exactly what we've done. Now, five, six, or seven years ago, you know, *The Immoral Mr. Teas* was sort of the modern granddaddy of these pictures. And, of course, prior to that time, we had what we called the Main Street movies, that used to be shown off and on in various out-of-the-way theaters, and pictures that were distributed here by a man named Dan Funny—*Virgin in Hollywood* and crap like that. That went out of vogue, and we came in here with technicolor nudie pictures where women's breasts were fully exposed for the first time. For about two years we rode on the crest of what you might call bourgeois popularity. People thought it was the thing to do. And you could go to a dentist's office or a doctor's office or a lawyer's office and you could hear *The Immoral Mr. Teas* being discussed because all of the so-called intelligentsia had to rush down and see what was going on. I'll never forget the day that I ran into Kenneth Macgowan walking into one of my theaters.

We then felt that the nudie had to have a story and it had to have some kind of justifiable redeeming grace in order to get someone to come in to see it. Well, it was a joke. We found ourselves paying 40% and 50% for pictures which were doing maybe $2,500 or $3,000 per week. I threw it all out and I put in nothing but 16mm girlie shows and we doubled our grosses because we found the public is interested in one thing only, and that is girls. They're not interested in any color or any story or any old men ogling the girls. They want to ogle the girls. And, as a result, the theaters have just turned into a bonanza. So, I would say, getting back to your comment about young film-makers, yes, if they want to come in and learn how to shoot girls, and, incidentally, pick up a few other interesting things about our business, it would be a good place for them to start. At least they could keep the film in focus, which helps. I've produced several myself.

As far as the nudie field goes, there is not a sellers' market. Other people haven't got into it. Most of them have gone broke, because they don't understand the market. I know a lot of people who have made a lot of money off it, Russ Meyer is one man who's made money off of it. However, there are many many more who have lost money in a business that they should never have had to lose money in. They should all be profitable, but they don't know what to do.

Now, the big thing, though, is this business about the commercial Hollywood theaters. I would say that it is becoming more of a buyers' market than it has been in the past five or six years, perhaps. Now, when I say that I mean that if the buyer has the right plant to exhibit the merchandise in, if he has a beautiful new theater with adequate seating capacity, plenty of parking, well-groomed staff, and an intelligent buyer and booker, I would say, while it still

is a sellers' market, it isn't so much so. It definitely is a sellers' market in small towns and in areas where there are theaters competing severely for the product without one distinguishing plant. Now you might say, for example, the San Fernando Valley is an example of a hardcore sellers' market. It would not be that if someone would buy a 2,000-seat beautiful theater. That would be eliminated right there.

Schedules

When you get into the nudie business, you have to throw out all preconceived notions and anything you know about commercial Hollywood pictures because nothing applies. Now, in New York, for example, many theaters do a lot of business in the afternoons. That is not the case here in Los Angeles. There are very few theaters here that ever do any business before 7:00 PM and I don't care what you're running, *Tom Jones, Gone With the Wind,* or *Girls on the Beach.* That isn't the case with the nudie theaters. Most of our business in the nudie theaters is done between 10:00 AM and noon. Now, no one believes that, but that's true. And the second largest shot of business comes between midnight and 2:00 AM. Now, bear in mind that I'm speaking of my own nudie theaters. But I suspect that what I tell you is true of other houses. Although those theaters do not open up early in the morning, and I don't know why they don't. Of course, I often find myself in a position of doing something and everybody copies me. That may sound egotistical, but I don't mean it to. We've been copied by everybody in town. If we do one thing, they'll do it. I'm surprised they haven't gone all night and I'm surprised they're not open 24 hours a day. We find it very profitable.

Obscenity

Anyone who is in the business of exhibiting films that could have questionable "social redeeming importance" had better have *some* idea of what obscenity is. Even so, not that I don't know what it is, and not that I don't feel that I could express it very clearly, but I'll tell you that is one thing that we are continually being asked to define, and the courts can't define it and I can't. I can tell you this . . . the reason I won't answer that question directly is only because I have been in a position of acting as a witness or being subpoenaed on occasion, not to protect myself but to protect others, and to come up with this obscenity definition is just too confining, I don't want to do it. I can tell you, though, that there are certain areas that we avoid as far as the kind of films that we show. For example, we do not permit any pubic hair to be exhibited in any of our films. In San Francisco and Sacramento, and in Fresno, there are theaters, very prominently located, that I have been in recently and in all three of them, particularly the one in Sacramento, I thought I was inside of a women's bath house. I've really never seen so much complete nudity in my life. This particular theater in Sacramento is within a stone's throw of the state capitol. Incidentally, there is another theater in a suburb in Los Angeles that has the same thing. We have not resorted to that.

Pressure Groups

We have been subjected to rather bizarre attempts at pressure, none of which have ever been serious. In all the years that we've been running exploitation pictures there has only been one arrest and the arrest was on a completely ludicrous basis and was thrown out of court, in a very memorable display of temper, by the judge. It happened almost four years ago in the Apollo on Hollywood Blvd. In front of the theater a poster was exhibited on a motion picture called *The Ruined Bruin* and on that 40" x 60" poster was a picture from *Playboy* magazine, from an article on this picture; a picture of snapshot size had been clipped from the magazine and pasted on this poster. There was a girl's bare breast exposed in this picture. Now, her breast was probably about the size of the eraser of this pencil and bear in mind the size of the poster. Well, a vice-squad officer came in and arrested the manager for exhibiting a lewd and obscene photograph. He was immediately taken down to the Hollywood police station, booked and fingerprinted and treated like a

hardened criminal. Well, I was called on the phone and he was quite upset, as I was, and I came over and bailed him out, and, of course, I thought . . . I didn't actually know what had happened. I thought there was a morals charge on the theater, someone had been hurt or something, I didn't know what was going on. Finally, one of the officers told me what had happened. Well, it was so foolish that we decided to make a regular case out of it, and we originally planned to go to a man named Stanley Fleischman, who is more or less an expert. We decided not. We decided to just go to our regular attorney. When the judge asked to have the evidence presented, the District Attorney's office came in with this great big poster and the judge said, well, what's wrong with the poster and they said, why there's an obscene photograph here—and he couldn't *see* it. That was the funny part of it all, and the court admonished the DA's office for wasting the time and money of the public.

And I can recall one time we had a call here from a councilman in the Hollywood area complaining that he has received calls from PTA groups, mothers complaining that their children have to walk past the Vista, which is right at Hollywood and Sunset Boulevard, on their way to school. They thought that the pictures in front of the theater were corrupting these children. I told him, after a little thought, that if that was all the mothers were worried about, sending their children to school down one of the worst streets in the nation, then they had absolutely nothing to worry about.

Other than that, we haven't really had any pressure. We've had much more pressure with the Russian pictures. For example, when they were originally exhibited at the Vista in Hollywood, the local headquarters for the Republican National Committee were right next door. Now I happen to be a registered Republican and I was subjected to all kinds of pressure and I couldn't figure out where the pressure was coming from. The police would come into the theater and say that a complaint had been made that we were taking up all the parking area. So they painted loading zones on curbs to keep people from parking two or three hours. Then we used to have investigations also every so often where the police would come in and say that there was fighting in the theater because someone called someone a Communist and then there was pressure about *The People's World* which is a publication in San Francisco in which we advertise. Finally there was a direct call which came to our theater from the Republican group next door having to do with parking or something and I went over to see them and said I had been a regular and generous contributor and I believe my money had even gone through that office and when they found out who I was and that I was running this kind of pictures, they didn't quite know what to say and it proved to be rather embarrassing. I lowered the boom on them and told them that if they wanted to be critical they could at least be constructive in what they had to say, but that was one type of pressure that was a little amusing. We've had threats of bombing of theaters, we have had . . . I'm talking about strictly the Russian pictures. But the most severe pressure I've ever had since I've been in the theater business has been from the Negroes and it was specifically from the NAACP over the exhibition of *Birth of a Nation.* And that pressure was so serious that I called the Police Department out to protect the theater and to protect me. This was in 1957, when I was employed, incidentally, as a manager for Fox West Coast Theaters, and the theater that I managed happened to be a theater that I now own, the Apollo on Hollywood Boulevard. (Incidentally, the site of the Vista is where many of the scenes for *Birth of a Nation* were filmed.) Had the theater belonged to me, I would have let them all demonstrate, I didn't care.

Censorship

I censor the Russian films myself occasionally, using just my own academic knowledge. I have eliminated certain sections of films and have been severely criticized for doing so. The reason I eliminated it was strictly from a commercial standpoint, for no other reason, strictly commercial. In other words, my theaters are operated

really primarily for profit and if they cannot be profitable then they cannot operate. Any other benefits that come from them, such as educational dissemination and what have you, come as a secondary item; they are primarily theaters of entertainment and if a censoring of a picture enhances its commercial value, then I am in favor of it. However, not if the censorship is strictly for censorship's sake.

Reviews

Occasionally we have critical reviews, say, on the exploitation pictures at the Apollo. They have no effect on box office. About critical reviews, for example, at the Europa, let me say this, if the review if bad, it will not hurt the picture any more than the picture will hurt itself. In other words, what I'm saying is there is usually a direct correlation between the amount of business a picture does and its wallop. If a film is very good it will usually do a very good business. The only two reviewers that I read are Margaret Hartford and Kevin Thomas for the *L. A. Times.*

I'll tell you, the school newspapers are very important. Of course, the great mistake that is made with the school newspapers is that the students supposedly are interested in the better things. This is one of the jokes of the film societies in the various schools. It is not the students that support the films that are shown on campus, nor is it the students that support the so-called better films in the theaters, and they never did. They didn't do it ten years ago or twenty years ago or now. They support mostly trash. And it's only a hard-core group of students that will support anything worthwhile, and if they support more than that it's for one reason only and that is, they're curious. As far as the student newspapers go, they are important for advertising. As far as reading the review of Joe Doe, I don't think any of them care about it. Unfortunately, because some of the newspapers have fairly good reviewers.

Audiences

We have a motto in our company that is on every piece of letterhead; it has directly to do with audiences and it says that better motion pictures create better audiences. Now as far as audiences go, of the people who go to the Europa, 50% of them are Russian-speaking and Polish-speaking. I would say that about 20% are students, and the other 30% are the mish-mash, the curious, and maybe if we have a ballet picture it's people interested in ballet and so forth. I think as far as the nudie theaters go most of the patrons are single men that are probably in a professional or salesmen or an upper-income bracket. It used to be that everyone thought we would get the bums from Main Street and that type of thing. But we charge the highest admission in Los Angeles for a motion picture, with the exception of the road shows—$2.00, $2.50. Admission has nothing to do with attendance of these theaters. People that come to them can afford those prices and twice that much. If you have a picture the public wants to see they will come to see it and it doesn't really make a difference how much it costs, as long as it's within reason. If it's a picture they're not interested in seeing you can run it free and they will not come to see the picture.

If we stay within the past 12 months the biggest grosser in the Europa theater was a picture called *Dimka.* The story of a little boy. A very charming Russian film. The biggest grosser at the Valley West was *Tom Jones.* And the biggest grosser at the Vista was a picture that we played a few weeks ago called . . . I can't think of it. It was one of the shows we put together over there and it had a rather bizarre advertising campaign. The biggest grossing picture we ever played in the Paris was a picture called *The Bellboy and the Playgirl* with June Wilkinson. She was then at the height of her so-called career. The biggest grossing film ever at the Vista was a film called . . . we called it a private collection of girlie photos that were made available throughout the world and we captioned it *Unusual Behavior* and it was sensational.

Seasons

Whenever we have three-day holidays men have to spend time with their families and they don't come to our nudie theaters. At the Europa, it's

pretty stable. At the commercial theaters, the pre-Christmas period is very bad. Between Easter Vacation and summer is bad. The period between Labor Day and Thanksgiving is sometimes kind of slow.

Business

Our greatest expense is our payroll, then film rental and advertising. They're absolutely necessary to operate our theaters and if we spend $10,000 on an advertising campaign and only gross $3,000 we're in a lot of trouble. It happens consistently on certain types of films and that's what determines what we can play profitably.

Concessions are very important. They vary in our theaters. With the new theaters we're building, all designed to be commercial Hollywood-type theaters, concessions will be very important. They have little impact at the nudies: men don't care about eating candy. I think they would like to have a bar or something like that, which I'm working on. Then we'd have to limit the admission to 21 (I don't know how they're going to enforce that) but we've already come up with the idea of beer and wine and I've expanded it to liquor.

We limit our advertising with the nudie houses. And some of the media limit the advertising. There are many college newspapers, for example, that will not accept our ads. I've asked them to publish the same ads that appear in the *Times* and they used to do it, and now they don't want to do it. The UCLA *Bruin* publishes almost everything. If you want to commend a newspaper, for running ads for pictures like that, the *Bruin* has certainly had a very open policy. Not that they haven't had a censorship, because they have to a very limited extent, but the main thing about the *Bruin* is that when they ever questioned an ad, which has been very seldom, they have always told me what to put in in place of it to make it acceptable.

Unfortunately, the motion picture industry is continually the whipping-boy because it's so vulnerable. They always run whenever anything happens and within the last year the *L. A. Times* went through one of the worst censorship tactics of advertising that I think I have ever witnessed in my short time in the motion picture business. Now they're easing up a little bit because, frankly, it just got to be a little ridiculous. They got to the point where they would not accept a girl in a bikini bathing suit. Frankly, some of the alternatives they've used are twice as bad and I can give you many, many examples. In fact, I have now taken the attitude that if they want to censor anything down there, all I ask them to do is put in what they want to put in because usually what they put in is much worse. So that has now backfired completely. Of course, the whole things boils down to the fact that they claim that they have to censor these ads because of criticism from their readers and I often wonder how much criticism they got backing Goldwater. I mean this is just so silly it really doesn't warrant discussion.

Actually, it wouldn't matter if we didn't advertise for the nudie cuties, now that the theaters are established as definitive sources of unusual entertainment. However, people have a short memory; at least the public attending these films does, and I think that the only purpose that the ad serves is their reminder. I think we could cut our advertising budget and I don't think our business would suffer. However, why experiment?

I think the greatest plague that we have in theaters today is bad management. The reason for it is because the executive levels of the theater business are so poor. We do not have the right quality of people working in our theaters from a management standpoint; nor do we have it in the other categories. The amount of people that are working in our business with college educations is absolutely minimal and you just have to trace it back to the people who own the theaters. Now we are gradually getting out of that. The justification of having such a poor group of people is always based on "showmanship," that no matter how ignorant the man is and no matter what bad taste he has, if he is a "showman" he is okay. Now that's what nearly ruined our industry. We need people who have some brains and I think that we have a few production companies, distribution companies that have learned that and rather than making

pictures like *The Prodigal* and *Diane* and pictures like this, we now have a different kind of film being produced and it's because people with some brains are attempting to take over the industry. They can improve business in theaters by improving management and by, in many cases, improving the plants themselves.

The business has changed tremendously over the past ten years: people's habits are different, people have many more things to do, they have more money; therefore, instead of competing with television now we are competing against the backyard barbecues, swimming pools, automobiles—which, of course, are a much greater threat than television, in the sense that everyone has an automobile and they can go places and do things and they are not limited to nonparticipating entertainment. They can participate in many things. Whereas during the war, you know, everybody thought that the theaters did so well because there wasn't anything else to do. There were a lot of other things to do, but you couldn't get to them—there wasn't any gas and there wasn't any rubber, you see. The automobile is a great threat to us. And another big change is there does seem to be a change in public taste. People got a little smarter, they're not accepting a film just because it's a Cannes film festival award winner, that doesn't mean anything any more. I shouldn't say that people are getting smarter, they're becoming more aware, and certain groups of people are becoming more aware of certain things in motion pictures. I think the director and the producer and the writer are more important than they ever were in terms of the names. The public is becoming more selective in what they will buy.

If the nudie market did collapse, I would probably just remodel the theaters, change the names, give them a complete new face-job and go on and run whatever the commercial thing was of that day.

PETER COWIE

Dutch Films

The Netherlands have been neglected by film critics (though—to judge from distribution figures—not by cinema audiences) since the departure of Joris Ivens and the end of World War II. It was Ivens of course who, in May 1928, had really launched Dutch films when he made *De Brug (The Bridge),* a study of movement about the drawbridge over the Koningshaven at Rotterdam. Iven's work, which later comprised such masterpieces as *Rain, New Earth, Zuiderzee,* and *Spanish Earth,* was effected in close harmony with Mannus Franken, now undeservedly forgotten. Together they dropped all the traditional baggage of the film industry—decor, studio, acting—and concentrated instead on the development of a realistic documentary style. Ivens became less popular when his anticolonialist feelings grew more marked and his pieces of reportage assumed the impassioned virulence of social and economic debate.

Like Robert Flaherty and Pare Lorentz (both of whom he collaborated with), Ivens was a visionary who was fascinated by man's ability continually to adapt himself to nature's capricious demands. He was the chronicler *par excellence*—in *New Earth* and *Zuiderzee*—of the Dutch campaign against the sea, and this involvement in mankind's struggles led him in later years to become a tireless challenger of fascism, whether in Spain *(Spanish Earth)* or China *(400 Millions).* Throughout his career he has been a witness of events, recording misery and dissension with an uncompromising spirit. The most bitter part of *New Earth* is the last reel, where one sees the harvest, grown on hard-won land, being thrown back into the sea because of the depression of 1930. Ivens, unlike most Dutch film-makers nowadays, has been a nomad by instinct, and has completed documentaries in over a dozen countries. He was even Professor of Cinema at the University of Southern California in 1941.

His style is possessed of a rigor that has also distinguished the films of many of the younger Dutch directors. It is the organization of shots—of "raw material"—that is vital if the truth is to be presented in a dynamic, provocative way. Yet despite his political zeal, Ivens is an unusual combination of realist and poet. For over twenty years he abandoned the romantic approach that had marked *The Bridge, Rain,* and *Branding,* only to return to it with the mature lyricism of *La Seine a Recontré Paris* in 1957. Although impressed by the abstract fluency of Walter Ruttman's *Berlin,* and by German expressionism in general, Ivens characteristically eschewed the artificially composed image, letting movement within the frame and rhythmic montage make an impact on the spectator, in the same way as Grierson and Wright did in Britain. The structure that he used in *Rain*—situation, incident, return to *statuts quo ante*—has been followed frequently in recent years in such Dutch shorts as *Sunday Sun* (Jan van der Hoeven) and *Aqua di Roma* (by Boud Smit). And his interest in human beings and animals has been inherited by Bert Haanstra and Herman van der Horst.

Today, Holland produces around a hundred shorts annually. Most of these are distributed in several countries, and such minor classics as Bert Haanstra's *Glass* (prizes at 14 festivals and an Oscar) and *Rembrandt* appear repeatedly in film-society programs, in art houses, or on television. A visit to Amsterdam this spring convinced me that in the past few years the Netherlands have—with Canada—made the most important contribution to the evolution of the documentary film. Now, with the enormous success of Haanstra's full-length study of the people of Holland, *Alleman* (Golden Bear at the Berlin Festival, 1964, and an Oscar nominee this year) perhaps Dutch films will be as widely respected as they were thirty years ago.

In addition to this tradition of quality, film-makers in the Netherlands have two significant advantages over directors in other countries. They enjoy a measure of independence unheard of in the United States or even in France, and they possess, in the perpetual love-hate struggle with the sea and the water, a dominant indigenous source of material and inspiration. It is difficult for the foreigner to grasp the fundamental importance of the dikes and the windmills to the Dutch. For them they symbolize not a decorative and picturesque pattern of life but a means of survival—tokens of progress and fortitude. Time and time again, then, Dutch film-makers return to this theme—*The Dike Builders, Praise the Sea, Hold Back the Sea, Delta Phase*

One, Sailing—the titles speak for themselves.

Although some big institutions (such as Philips, KLM, and Royal Dutch Shell) sponsor short films, it is the government to which the budding director in Holland will turn. If his script is approved by the Ministry of Culture, the budget will often be met in full, and yet the director's artistic control will never be wrested from him. This can lead to a limitation of outlook and approach, but there is no denying the variety of themes—fiction and nonfiction—that are open to the "sponsored" director in the Netherlands: biographies and profiles, war stories, comedies, surrealist fantasies, topographical studies. State aid for the cinema is, after all, a matter of degree, and while some topics, such as colonialism, might be beyond the pale, the attitude of the Ministry of Culture in The Hague is by ordinary standards extremely catholic. The government will never refuse the money once the idea, however daring, has been passed by the Arts Council. The Dutch, being aware of their lack of feature-film facilities, have sensibly concentrated on developing the short-film market. It is, John Ferno maintains, the age of the specialist; the day of the "complete" film-maker is over. This is why film-makers as gifted as Bert Haanstra, Herman van der Horst, and George Sluizer prefer to work in the Netherlands rather than to accept lucrative offers from abroad. Many form their own production companies, thus ensuring that they receive a handsome proportion of the profits from their work. Haanstra has constructed an attractively equipped studio of his own from the box-office receipts of *Alleman*. It is built below ground in his garden at Laren, and its owner demonstrates its intricate mechanisms with disarming boyishness.

It can be argued that the true artist has never flourished except in conditions of hardship. But this seems to me irrelevant in this particular case. There is a long tradition of patronage in the Netherlands, from which the seventeenth-century poets and painters profited. What one can legitimately look for and find wanting is the artist of Rembrandt's caliber who dares to depict his countrymen as they really are—and to be deprived of his subsidy for his pains. Louis van Gasteren (discussed later in this article) is the nearest to an *enfant terrible* in the current spectrum, and Fons Rademakers is clearly not interested in directing shorts about dike-building. None of the others sets his sights beyond the domestic horizon. And even here the growth of affluence has eliminated many of the social grievances that incensed Ivens. It is, to be sure, an inward-looking cinema, but so lacking in smugness is its personality, so meticulous its craftsmanship, and so unfailingly honest its exponents, that one learns to accept it on its own terms.

Who are these film-makers who between them have won more than 150 festival awards in the past decade? Senior among the group is John Ferno, who began as a cameraman under Ivens on *New Earth*, and was in charge of all photography on *Spanish Earth*. In 1934, at the age of twenty, he made *Easter Island* (then practically unexploited), an astonishingly mature study of the tribe there and its legendary statues. The film reminds one strongly of Buñuel's compassionate *Las Hurdes*, shot two years earlier. Henri Storck edited this piece, and Maurice Jaubert composed the music. Ferno worked at the National Film Board of Canada and in the United States from 1938 onwards and made, among other films, *And So They Live*. Two model documentaries of their kind were his *Broken Dikes* and *The Last Shot*, showing with tragic thoroughness how the Dutch flooded the artificial island of Walcheren in order to flush out the Germans in 1945, and the difficult period of rehabilitation after the war. Both have an air of bitterness and actuality that is imposing even after twenty years.

One mentions Ferno's work in detail because it forms a link with the golden era of Dutch film-making. Although he has lived outside Holland for many years, he does reflect in his films the tradition of tough, uncompromising cinema that Ivens veered toward in the later thirties. Ferno is still full of ideas and has recently directed an excellent short in Cinerama entitled *Fortress of Peace*, which stresses the eternal vigilance of the Swiss Army in peacetime and is rich in imaginative flourishes and mock battles among the mountains. (It was commissioned for the Exposition in Lausanne last year.) Ferno, like nearly everyone I spoke to in the Netherlands, complains of the lack of good scriptwriters and hence of dramatic ideas. Features are difficult to set up, not merely because of the shortage of money, but because of a dearth of actors, most of whom in Holland are attached to numerous and busy theater companies. Haanstra had a huge success with his *Fanfare* in 1958, but even then he was compelled to wait two years before he could float another feature—and then only at his own expense. The language market is a severely limiting factor, but the success of *Alleman* in the Netherlands alone proves that a good return can sometimes be attained. Another cause of the trouble is that talented feature directors, like Rademakers, will tend to go overseas and shoot with foreign actors. Furthermore, the

Committee of Exhibitions in the Netherlands is much more prone to support a big-budget film than a small, modestly priced one. The country does not possess a system like that of Sweden (which has a population only two-thirds that of the Netherlands and yet produces over twenty features annually) whereby the production companies also own chains of cinemas and powerful distribution outlets. The hard fact of the matter is—as Haanstra impressed on me—that one cannot retrieve production costs on the home market if the budget rises beyond $170,000.

But Haanstra, who won his first Grand Prix at Cannes in 1951, is known internationally for his lyrical documentaries, *Mirror of Holland, The Rival World, Rembrandt,* and *Glass.* His two recent works, a short called *Zoo,* and the outstanding *Alleman* (meaning *Everyman,* though the title given it in English is *The Human Dutch*), have collected several awards and indicate a new style of filming in Haanstra's career. Each relies on the "candid-camera" technique. *Zoo* is an amusing exercise in which, Haanstra says, he has "tried to see the zoo as a very pleasant and interesting place where watching people is quite as interesting as watching animals." Indeed, for much of the film the human beings are seen behind bars. Only the animals appear to possess a calmness and a dignity here. Haanstra plays on both accidental and suggestive resemblances between man and the animals whom, now, he regards with rather affronted curiosity. A girl's striped dress resembles a zebra; a woman eating a huge sandwich is uncomfortably close to a lioness gnawing her midday meat. *Zoo* was greatly admired by Jacques Tati, who bought the film for his own distribution company, and insisted it be played in support of his own features in French cinemas.

Haanstra's two feature films have not been appreciated outside Holland. *Fanfare* was a great success in the domestic market. It was set in the picturesque tourist village of Giethoorn, with a slender plot revolving around the rivalry of two brass brands, who eventually share the first prize at a music festival. The charm of the film stems from its observation of bucolic behavior. The characters, such as the town clerk, the bombardon player, and the visiting composer, are all beautifully drawn, their foibles and peculiarities dwelt upon by Haanstra in his inimitably mischievous manner. *The M.P. Chase,* which he financed himself in 1960, was a more professional film than *Fanfare,* but more artificial in construction. It is a Belgian-Dutch story, again of rivalry—this time between the countries' two football teams. The notorious Mannekin Pis statue in Brussels is stolen and each side blames the other for the loss. Both these films indicate Haanstra's fondness for the Ealing tradition, which influenced him when he began his career in the late forties.

ALLEMAN

Alleman is Haanstra's most personal and sustained work to date. Superficially a documentary about Holland, it comes as near as any film can to catching the underlying rhythm of a nation's life and, at some moments, achieves a significance far beyond the parochial habits it portrays. Haanstra observes his fellow creatures with an engaging blend of warmth, candor, and amusement. His candid-camera shots are never exploited maliciously, Haanstra regards the technique as the only really effective method of recording people as they behave naturally. "It is so easy to shock," he admits, "but I wanted to make a picture showing people not as dogs (which Jacopetti does in his *Mondo Cane* series) but as recognizable human beings." And running through *Alleman* like a musical fugue is a profound, vigorous respect for mankind—for his capacity to be sad, gay, individualistic, religious, self-sufficient and above all, *free* (expressed in that deftest of shots: the skater swooping gracefully along a canal without a soul in sight).

Both Ferno and Haanstra are sons of painters; yet another director with an artistic background is Charles Huguenot van der Linden. A slim man, perhaps the most audacious of all the Dutch filmmakers beneath his self-effacing charm, van der Linden was responsible for two exciting shorts, *Interlude by Candlelight* and *Big City Blues.* Both have a disturbing, almost sinister dimension: the old professor's marionettes, made from bird's skeletons and such like, come to eerie life after dark in *Inter-*

lude by Candlelight; and *Big City Blues,* with its stark, formal story of attempted rape and death, shows that van der Linden is capable of manipulating sound, image, and situation to create a study in fear that has connotations far beyond the boy-and-girl context in which it is set. The faults in both pieces are faults of execution (hammy acting, melodramatic climaxes), rather than of conception. And *Big City Blues,* set in a half-finished warehouse, is as much in key with the inscrutable advances of our scientific age as parts of *L'Eclisse.* This is not to suggest a detailed comparison between van der Linden and Antonioni, but to stress that not all Dutch films are oblivious of changes in man's outlook and fears.

"As soon as fantasy and imagination disappear from features, they will be dead," maintains van der Linden, and he is at present working on a longer film to be shot this winter called *The Wild Years,* which will be a dramatic inquiry into the motives behind the kleptomania of a group of juvenile delinquents. Despite censorship difficulties in a very morally conscious country, van der Linden is obviously concerned with human *distortions* and the relationship between the sexes: "Goodness is a negative quality," he says. He has a rigorous talent in the editing room and also a flair for using location shooting to its maximum advantage.

The Dutch member of the short film jury at Cannes this year was Herman van der Horst, whose films on nature and fishing have won him acclaim as the successor to Ivens, at dozens of festivals since his *Metamorphose* was shown in 1945. An exceptionally dedicated and painstaking director, he relishes films that reflect the social life and flow of his country. One has the impression he regards the cinema as a calling where men in a similar position in Britain or America might regard it as a profession. A champion of working folk, he has produced such memorable paeans to the water as *Shoot the Nets* and *Praise the Sea.* For van der Horst the soundtrack is as vital (and never more so than in his colorful study of Surinam, *Faja Lobbi*) as the montage, and in all his work the images and natural noises form a delicate syncopation. He is never satisfied unless he is able to control every aspect of his films from start to finish, and admits that he knows of no country outside of the Netherlands where he could obtain this independence. His freshly released *Amsterdam* is perhaps his most restrained and beautiful achievement. This film is set apart from other city-symphonies by its remarkable mingling of elements from the city's history with its bustling life of today. Van der Horst depicts the slow sea change Amsterdam has undergone since its halcyon days in the seventeenth century. Old paintings dissolve into shots of the same scenes and places as they stand now. Van de Horst regards the untidiness, the cleanliness, the gaiety and the stillness, with the tolerance of a poet's eye. *Amsterdam,* enhanced by its pastel colors and by a soundtrack of great imagination, belongs among the most distinguished documentaries of our time.

Most flambuoyant and volatile of the independent Dutch film-makers is Louis van Gasteren. Brought up in a theatrical family (his father was a renowned actor), he joined a newsreel company and began writing film scripts. In 1950 he founded his own company, Spectrum Films, and although he did make a lively documentary about the surf boats of Accra for the Van Houten organization, he has firmly rejected commercial work since. He uses nothing but his own equipment and is an ardent admirer of the American experimental film-makers as well as of Antonioni and Resnais. His most ambitious work, *The House* (30 minutes) is an attempt to split up a fragment of thought in time. Thus it flashes back and forth throughout the history of an old house that is now being demolished. Memories of love, of birth, and of death in the war, are revived. In the words of van Gasteren: "As the house is pulled down, so the lives of its occupants are constructed, not out of a need to put everything into chronological order, but from the knowledge of the inevitable end." This ebullient director is bursting with ideas covering every subject from germ warfare to advanced mathematics. He would sell all that he owns to be able to work in Italy, alongside his friend, Fellini. (The fact that van Gasteren *does* own a house-cum-studio of his own in central Amsterdam is typical of the almost rebellious longing for self-sufficiency inherent in the Dutch. Instead of agents, one finds, most directors have their own offices and secretaries. Ferno, when he is in the Netherlands, runs his affairs from a windmill used

BIG CITY BLUES

by the Resistance during the war.) This summer van Gasteren lectured on film at Harvard and (briefly) at UCLA, and is presently making *Winter Day,* a feature-length, Pirandellian tale of a film-maker who finds his material developing and expanding beyond his control. He is also involved in a psychological profile of the world judo champion, Anton Geesink, and a study of the French poet, Rimbaud.

While the complaint of van Gasteren and others is that the Netherlands do not possess a truly international producer, there are some directors who work full time under the aegis of a production company or even a laboratory. Thus Cinecentrum in Hilversum, a remarkable complex comprising every branch of technical expertise from subtitling to cartoon production and newsreels, employs men of the caliber of Frans Dupont and Hattum Hoving. Both are talented, if specialized, film-makers. Dupont, like Ferno a pupil of Joris Ivens, was engaged on independent productions as long ago as 1934. But in recent years he has proved himself the most adept "art film" director in Holland, with *Promise of Heaven* and *Portrait of Frans Hals.* The former is dedicated essentially to stained glass, but is also a study of daylight and the subtly differing shades of color that it can arouse in objects. The striking central sequence shows how, in everyday life, human beings have resorted to the same colors as those of the rainbow—traffic lights, neon signs and the like proving the point. Dupont uses color just as sensitively in his homage to Frans Hals. The film gives one a glimpse of the majority of the paintings and concentrates particularly on the severe splendor of the later period; Dupont avoids the trite view of Hals as a gay, rather careless painter. He regards sponsored films as a necessary discipline and, although at the moment directing a short for Shell, is intent on producing a cinematic study of pottery as soon as he can.

Partly because of the Ivens tradition, and principally because of the lack of funds and facilities, Dutch directors have been restricted to short-film making. As a result they have perfected this class of film into an extraordinarily powerful means of expression. Hattum Hoving's *Sailing* is typical of the Dutch short at its best. Hoving, himself a yachtsman, spent two years shooting and editing his film at Cinecentrum and at dozens of locations throughout the Netherlands. *Sailing* (without a commentary but enlivened by some spare, electronic music) succeeds in penetrating to the heart of its subject: the sense of freedom, the exultation of the yachtsman as

SAILING

he combats the winds and the waves, are conveyed with a discreet lyricism that raises the film to the level of an ode to the sport. The entire piece is imbued with an uncanny rhythm that suggests the assiduous care Hoving has devoted to his subject (significantly, perhaps, he would like to direct a film on musical forms). *Sailing* was sold to thirty countries within a year of its release, probably not least on account of the brilliant color, imaginatively used but also perfectly processed.

Despite their insularity, not all Dutch film-makers remain unaffected by developments in other countries. George Sluizer, born in Paris, a former pupil at the IDHEC, and now 33, was assistant to Haanstra on *Fanfare.* Shell then commissioned him to make *Hold Back the Sea,* concerned with the reclamation of polders and low-lying areas around the Zuiderzee. This revealed in Sluizer a curiously profound feeling for the land and the water, and, not surprisingly, his first independent venture emphasized this sentiment still further. *Clair Obscur* has an avant-gardist air during its opening minutes, with the ambivalent hero stalking the polders with a microphone, trying to capture the sounds of birds and cattle. Then, as a storm breaks, the young man finds himself cut off everywhere by the dikes that

CLAIR OBSCUR

Herman van der Horst shooting
PRAISE THE SEA

lace the countryside. Nature, as in Herman van der Horst's Pan, seems to be taking her revenge on this intruder into her privacy. The richly tinted color, the somber clarinet accompaniment, combine with some virtuoso camerawork and editing to make *Clair Obscur* an arresting film. He is at present completing a documentary in widescreen and color about the economic progress of southern Ireland, and is also preparing a short about the emotions of a group of Spanish settlers in Holland. As an outsider by birth and education, Sluizer has treated his subjects so far with a refreshing objectivity, and his original talent holds promise of important things to come. He is an experimenter, an essayist in film, but he regrets the restricted release to which shorts are condemned.

Fons Rademakers is the only Dutch director who managers to make features consistently. A man of the theater, originally, he was introduced to the cinema through a friendship with Jacques Feyder while in Geneva during the war. He was assistant to De Sica on *Il Tetto*, and made his first feature, *The Village on the River*, in 1958. This was an amusing but also rather bizarre story of parochial life and a study of a legendary doctor, who could have stepped out of Pagnol. Rademakers is a friend of Ingmar Bergman, and all his work to date has echoes of the master's ability to fuse the techniques of the film and the stage. *The Knife*, for example, a convincing view of life through the eyes of a boy, contains a dream scene that reminds one of similar Freudian excursions in Bergman's early period. *The Spitting Image* (1963) takes place during World War II and shows how an unassuming young man finds that a secret agent is his double and is tempted to undertake dangerous missions. There is something satanic and uncanny about the end of the film, when the boy's girl-friend is seen on a beach with the *sosie*, unaware of his genuine identity. Rademakers is at present shooting *Heron's Dance*, from a script by his friend, Hugo Claus, on the coast of Yugoslavia, with Gunnel Lindblom.

There is a significant lack of animation work in Holland. This may be partly due to the fact that until now commercial television has not been granted government sanction (in Britain, on the other hand, animators can subsidize their own films through profits made on commercial TV-spots). But the Cine Cartoon Centre at Cinecentrum in Hilversum is directed by the talented Jim Hiltz, an American who started with Pintoff on *The Violinist* and has worked with George Dunning on many projects.

The work of these Dutch directors is stimulating because, despite the limitations of the short-film framework and market, they all give one the impression of being able to express their ideas and images without difficulty or interference. *Het Feest* (*The Party*), shown at Oberhausen last winter, and directed by Paul Verhoeven, displays yet another aspect of this expression; a positive film, free from pseudo-psychological overtones, it relates the love of a highschool pupil for a girl in another class, with a discretion and understanding unusual in films of this type. Like all Dutch shorts it is modest and unassuming, made with an attention to detail and behavior that puts the more vaunted work of other countries to shame as far as craftsmanship is concerned.

Where then, in the perspective of world cinema, does the body of work produced by the Dutch short film-makers truly stand? None of it aspires to philosophical significance; and the Netherlands have not yet produced their Bergman, Buñuel, or Renoir. No one director has promulgated a vision of the world, an attitude to universal problems (partly because one needs several feature-length films to achieve this, and, as noted above, features are difficult to set up in Holland), but each man has made his honest, often lyrical contribution to the fascinating mosaic of which the Dutch cinema is composed.

Film Reviews

SIMON OF THE DESERT

Director: Luis Buñuel. Producer: Gustavo Alatriste. Script: Buñuel. Photography: Gabriel Figueroa.

Buñuel's *Simon of the Desert* runs about 42 minutes. It was originally to have been the first half of a two-part picture. The second part was to have been made by De Sica; then Stanley Kubrick was mentioned. Finally the second part just didn't get made, and this may account for the abruptness of the ending of *Simon*—it looks as if Buñuel tacked on the last three minutes of the picture as a substitute for the missing second part.

The film is a portrayal of Saint Simon Stylites, who stood on a pillar in the desert for 27 years. We see Buñuel's Simon first as he moves from a modest ten-foot pillar to a dizzy thirty-foot pillar: the gift of a rich believer and token of Simon's success as a saint. Satan (Silvia Pinal, the Viridiana of *Viridiana*) shortly appears and the rest of the picture (except for that ending) presents a series of trials and temptations, successes and failings, of Simon. He performs a miracle, he chides a worldly priest and then a childish one, he turns his back on his mother, he talks with a blasphemous and deformed dwarf, he prays, and he matches his virtue against Satan's wits.

The closing sequence begins with what appears to be another temptation. Satan stands beside Simon on his pillar and tells him they are going on a long journey. He demurs, but she says he has no choice. She looks out into the sky and says, "Here they come," and we get a shot of a Boeing jet in the sky. There is an aerial view of Manhattan, a shot of the streets, and we see the two in a rock-and-roll dive. Simon is now in a turtle-neck sweater, beard and bangs, and puffing a pipe. He asks Satan the name of the dance they are watching and she says it is called "Radioactive Flesh." She wants to dance and when he refuses she rises to join the crowd. He gets up and when she asks where he is going he tells her he is going back. "You can't," she says, "There is another tenant." End.

The final passage is abrupt, off-handed, and distinctly smart-alecky, but this is probably because it is made to do the service of the missing second part of the film. Despite all that's wrong with it, the relation of the ending to the rest of the picture is clear and intelligent, but before I discuss the "meaning" of this startling sequence let me return to the body of the picture.

The tone is set by the miracle Simon performs at the very beginning—it is an authentic miracle achieved in answer to Simon's prayers, and Simon is an authentic saint. In the course of his temptations (not only the direct Satanic tricks, but the subtler temptations of reason, human love, and *decency*) we find that Simon is innocent, wise, humble, and charitable; in one scene after another we expect Simon to be shown up by Buñuel, and each time it doesn't happen. The saint is a match not only for Satan but for the cynical modern audience represented by Buñuel's zooming, swooping, nervous, intimate camera: he turns his back on his mother, but then he dreams of laying his head on her lap—he's no cold fanatic; he forgets the words of a prayer, but it doesn't bother him at all—he's no guilt-ridden neurotic; he is gulled by Satan's impersonation of Christ but not even from Christ can he accept sinful advice—he's no superstitious monk. Simon is a Christian saint portrayed in Christian terms. This is a tall order, but Buñuel never strikes a false note, never simplifies or takes the easy advantage, never patronizes Simon. The result is an astonishingly touching view of perfect Christian virtue triumphant in a wicked world. The end, however, pulls the rug out from under Simon, and the viewer, when the context of Simon's virtue is revealed: conventional wickedness and the machinations of Satan. The Simon of the turtle-neck sweater can't go back to that context, and neither can anyone else. Buñuel's target this time is not fraudulent or hypocritical or neurotic Christianity, but the modern nostalgia for simpler terms of virtue, for a comprehensible Satan full of rage and folly and stupid pride. He is no longer laughing or snarl-

ing at the Christian sham he hates, but facing, with warmth and humor, the hold that the Christian vision of the world has upon him, and the pathos of its inadequacy to the Dance of the Radioactive Flesh.

Buñuel is a film director so good that his excellences are almost invisible. Had another director made this film every critic would exclaim over the accomplishment of confining the action to the pedestal and the patch of earth around it; Buñuel makes it look easy. He has a pictorial imagination, perfect tact with the camera, and achieves the kind of economy that only the bold can risk. *Simon* has all his mastery, despite the contortion at the end, but more important it demonstrates again his extraordinary dignity, the moral serenity which can grant to the most depraved, the most grotesque, the most wretched human being its humanity. Even a saint.—JACKSON BURGESS

AN AUTUMN AFTERNOON

Inside it is already dark. Late. But only a few minutes. The titles must be just finished. Are we in the wrong theater? This doesn't look like a Japanese art film. It looks like *Godzilla!* The color of *Godzilla:* sickly Asian technicolor that turns blues into aqua, reds into melon. Tinted like cheap baby photography.

And the people of *Godzilla:* perfectly pressed grey suits, white shirts, vests, trousers fat and slightly too long, folded over shining shoes. They move in offices furnished in fake Japanese with plastic bamboos and water coolers. Secretaries with fixed noses. Occidental noses on Oriental faces. Windows open onto smokestacks.

My expectations—based on films of Kurosawa and Kinugasa—were way off. Ozu is altogether something else. All medium shots with actors dead center, straight on. No close-ups, or distance shots, or angles. Like TV: the camera deliberately fixed and frozen.

Arranging a match. They talk as if not talking —only their lips moving and that barely. *Hai . . . hai . . . so ga . . .*

The widower, the hero I guess, is beautifully refined. High aristocratic forehead above gentle eyes that turn suddenly blank. Sometimes these people are clerks when they should be scholars. *So ga . . .*

Polite. Polite. The other man a cruel thin-lipped face. He must have been in the army once. Anything is possible with him. Bespectacled, rimless, cold.

Old man with young wife. Subject of poor jokes. Mild, pallid, clinical yet underhanded sex. Small talk. Drink. Then a little animal shows through. A little dirty animal. Snicker. Giggle. Ugly.

Incredible. I keep looking and looking for something else—a gesture or a color, a crack through the deadly front. Ozu relentless. Layers and layers of flat ugliness, he opens up a little to show you the next layer.

No, Ozu. Life is not like that.

This is the daughter: short legs and bobby socks. Ugh. This is what they are trying to marry off or not marry off. Nasty and bitchy. She makes me ashamed. I am like that sometimes.

The same hallway. Same. Same. Same. People passing through in the back, crossing the hall, are no different than the ones in front. Deadly uniformity. No. I am not like that. Same scenes. Same shots. Same talk. Same drink.

But not completely frozen. Tiny movements underneath. There. Tiny tears. Almost imperceptible on surface.

Permanent discomfort on top. The widower has innocent eyes. *Hai. Yada . . . yada. . . .* That

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hall again and again. Only a few backgrounds Ozu moves his puppets in.

You can buy that apartment anywhere—maybe Woolworth's.

The kid is a teenage bear. He might be different. He looks like the kind of boy who has a certain smell at the back of his neck. And he looks warm. *So ga.* Yakety yak.

Doors. Doors. Doors. Flat and prefabricated. There is nothing beautiful or interesting to look at. I can't believe it. No big cards at all in Ozu's deck—no royalties. What kind of deck is that?

Another horrible girl. Bobby-sox. Eating grapes, she is really unpleasant. Do I look like that when I eat grapes? Never eat grapes again, at least not the kind with seeds to spit.

Degraded. Horrible degradation.

A woodcut! In the background in Thin-lip's office. A wild man in orange. Gone. There is just Thin-lips talking to the widower's daughter.

Rotary club. "The Gourd." What a frightened face. Terror. Don't blame him. I have seen him before—as scared samurai? An old teacher is sort of like an old servant. Drink up. This is giving me a thirst.

They drink, discuss old age and sex, sit in offices, go home to bitchy women. A total environment. Nothing else shown.

The woman's back. What is she going to be like? Another mean one? Old. Different from those bobby-soxers. Not bitchy—not yet anyway. This camera is never going to show you anything you have not seen before. She is not mean. Sad. Sad woman with hair permanently waved.

Telephone poles, apartments, trains, oil cans. Without drama. Without romance.

Poor Ozu. If it were really like that, you would not make films at all.

Dead! In these frames? Plastic coffin maybe with plaid liner? Wow. Treated as if it were a minor mishap. Cold! *Hai . . . hai . . .* What? Wait. Not dead. A joke. Good God.

The thin-lipped one capable of atrocity—anytime now.

Trashy, wavery violin music.

Hey, there's that fat samurai! Shorn of his costume: a fat little auto mechanic in nylon windbreaker. Oh, and The Gourd is slain—quite without malice. If his food is no good, it is no good. Even he has to agree. His stricken face. He lumbers after them to the tune of the music like an old clown—baggy pants, apron, all dusted with white flour. Pain. But it's not important. Hardly makes an impression. And quite unintentional—a casual accident, all in good will. Bravo, Ozu.

On, on to a more jazzy place. She certainly has a wide mouth. But he, dull fat pig of a little sailor-boy samurai, his mouth is like a spigot. Spigotting, "New York!" Funny and horrible the way he says that in Japanese. Happy! He is happy! No! Unbearable, grotesque strutting, ass sticking out—hup, hup! God! The good old days in the navy. Will the aristocratic widower participate? Oh, he is smiling. Tolerance? No, a genuine smile. Yes! Salute, lady. The widower's fingers are rising. Salute back. I'm sick. Now they are ghastly happy. Joy! A horror show. The real Godzilla! Ship ahoy and anchors aweigh. . . .

The hall again . . . the same door frame.

Oh but a little sentiment, a little relief like an oasis. His dead wife. Looked like the bar maid? Still gently, he enjoys thinking about her. They talk about her a little. A touch. Just a light touch of something warm and then bang the door is shut. Money! 50,000 yen to buy a new refrigerator for the grape-eating daughter-in-law to keep her grapes in.

Flowers? On long long stems? No. Of course not. Golf clubs. Not for her. For himself. So she's naturally irate. I know about that. At his age, etc. . . . toys. . . . Ghastly familiar sound. Whose fault is it? Who cares? Are all women sort of like that, and do all men covet golf clubs that much? He pouts. A long ludicrous smoky pout. She taunts. Small stabs. Take that and that and that and that.

No trace of beauty anywhere. No magic. Just crap and tiny tears.

The hall. The hall. The hall.

Trapped.

A visitor. A break. A pretty girl in a kimono. Ah, but it's Mishiko. The yakety bobby-soxer.

A long shot! The rules are broken. That rare

long shot shows her walking with the boy she likes upon a train platform. A lot of sky. This is the height of romance! Train tracks. Overhead wires. Talk about brother's marriage. Sometimes they are strangely direct. She is attractive.

Anyway it's a drop of water. Lap it up.

The doors shut. All is matter of fact. The arrangement, a business deal—have you considered marriage, etc. . . . but even that is false hope. Falls through. Even that, we are not allowed even that, and have to settle for second best. Four-hundredth best.

But it is all right. Keep a good face on it. *So ga* and *hai hai*. . . . No sweat, no tears, no pain, no joy . . . yet the widower seems truly gentle . . . it's possible he had a very beautiful wife, but Ozu does not wish to consider that.

Bow, bow. *Hai, hai*. . . .

Another woodcut? No, Mishiko beautiful in wedding costume! Traditional Japanese. She and the woodcut, she so much like the woodcut. Her face is porcelain. Without life. An exquisite Japanese doll.

The color makes everyone look bloodless. Ozu's reality is as monstrous as this color. He slices it so thin.

In the bar that naval march again. Is the widower going to strut? I can't take it. He's smiling. . . . Happy . . . drunk . . . he is about to salute . . . even that smile is unbearable . . . as long as he doesn't strut. . . . He doesn't! I'm thankful for small favors. Terror passes. Sad.

How old and drunk he is now.

The hall. The square room. The sons and the daughter-in-law waiting for the old man. It is almost tender. Their regard and concern for him. Even the grape-eater is nice. Things are melting a bit within the structure; within these same frames they are doing their best to take care of each other. The teen-age son will make the breakfast. He calls the old man to bed over and over again.

But the old man sits there all alone, and the film ends.

The next night. Again. To catch the beginning and to see more. So, the vertical Japanese titles, like a list. It's that office scene, though I can't remember where we actually walked in. All looks the same. I'm really tired. Men in correct grey suits, ladies beneath false noses. The match. It's the same movie all right. Exactly the same movie. I have to change positions to stay awake. There is no more to be seen. I am really trying to focus. I hardly ever fall asleep in movies. Ozu's world is too much for me tonight; I can't bring myself to contemplate it. So after about twenty minutes of respectable struggle, I walk out to go home to bed.—TUNG

Short Films

LA JETEE

Written, photographed, and directed by Chris Marker. Cutting: Jean Ravel. Music: Trevor Duncan. Narrator: Jean Negroni. Arcturus Films, 550 Fifth Avenue, New York. 29 minutes.

I cannot escape the feeling that *La Jetée* is a great film, and will last: a film so rich in emotional complexity and in its mastery of form that it will compel our attention beyond anything I have seen since *The Silence*. It is a film of heartbreaking nostalgia—nostalgia for the ordinary life, the ordinary loves, of our present. Its base point in time is just after World War III, when everything we know now has been destroyed; all that is left is a tyrannical band of survivors, living underground, desperately marshalling its remaining scientific resources to find a way out of the radioactive impasse—to draw upon the future for means of survival, by experiments in time travel.

The title refers to the observation pier overlooking the planes at Orly airport; like our term

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Written, photographed, and directed by Chris Marker. Cutting: Jean Ravel. Music: Trevor Duncan. Narrator: Jean Negroni. Arcturus Films, 550 Fifth Avenue, New York. 29 minutes.

I cannot escape the feeling that *La Jetée* is a great film, and will last: a film so rich in emotional complexity and in its mastery of form that it will compel our attention beyond anything I have seen since *The Silence*. It is a film of heartbreaking nostalgia—nostalgia for the ordinary life, the ordinary loves, of our present. Its base point in time is just after World War III, when everything we know now has been destroyed; all that is left is a tyrannical band of survivors, living underground, desperately marshalling its remaining scientific resources to find a way out of the radioactive impasse—to draw upon the future for means of survival, by experiments in time travel.

The title refers to the observation pier overlooking the planes at Orly airport; like our term

"gate" (through which one may pass, but not return) "jetée" also has a very faint allusiveness. The hero in fact is projected on successful journeys through time – often to the past, though also to the future – beginning at this same place. In the past he re-encounters a girl he has seen on the pier before the war, in one of those magical moments one remembers for life. He meets her at various times; she refers to him as "my ghost." Their walks through Paris, their visit to a museum of natural history, their awakening in bed, or sitting in the sun, are all perfectly ordinary, and yet infused with a sense of irrecoverable loss. The hero is brooding, wounded, the prey of the experimenters. The girl, who at first seems plain, becomes achingly beautiful because of that: no "beauty," she is terribly young, serious, human.

But all is juxtaposed with death, throughout the film, by Marker's adoption of what is ordinarily a dismaying and tiresome device: the use of stilled pictures. There is one flicker of movement in the film; that one instant makes the breath catch and the tears start. For the rest, the story is entirely told with a masterly flow of arrested motions; the shots are cut or dissolved into one another with a great fluidity and variety. There is a spare narration, which impersonally gives the essentials of the story. In the end the hero proves fit to visit the future; he does, but to this expedition attaches none of the humanity of his visits to the girl. Strange persons, with decorations on their faces, regard him as unkempt and unpleasant; but they give him the information needed to provide power for the survivors of the war. Later, he is to be liquidated; he refuses the chance of escape offered by the future; and, once again on the pier at Orly, he searches for the girl, and realizes that he might see too the boy he had been. What he sees instead is one of the experimenters; and he realises that he was present at the moment of his own death.

Marker's wit (though much of the verbal side of it escapes a foreigner) has been much admired; the photographic side of his films has seemed a bit too flip and haphazard. *La Jetée* is by contrast very complex in its psychology, in the nuances of its story. By adopting the stilled technique, Marker has been able to use nonactors, without sacrificing any of the idiosyncratic quality of his other films, and has overcome the usual problems of the nonprofessional: the hammy gesture, the selfconscious speech, the thinness of response. (I do not know at what point Marker decided to adopt the stilled technique; he will not even say whether the images were shot with a movie or still camera, though the former would have been easier, and there is some internal evidence in its favor also.)

The stilled images have a terrible documented quality, accentuated by their graininess. It is as if the film is saying, "These persons once existed, and were caught by these photographs; we show you now this partial record. It is all there is–they are no longer living." This is a different kind of effect from that of a normal film record (the technical term is "live photography") of people who are now dead. Such records are comforting. They stir our animistic unconscious feelings, and we are faintly reassured, as if to say, "Well, with this fine film they are not entirely dead after all." Marker's technique forecloses all such easy reaction possibilities.

A related effect of *La Jetée's* technique comes, I think, from the fact that we so badly *want* these people to move, to live. It is a movie, why are they not moving? The film of course has shown us, at the outset, the devastation of Paris; the dominant conventions of death, of fixity, tell us all too well why they are not moving. And yet, and yet. . . . From this comes the melancholy, the sense of mourning, in the film; and it is why that tiny moment of "live" motion, which is both a critical turning point in the plot and the most charged emotional moment in the film, is so terribly powerful.

Asked why he dealt so cursorily with the future, Marker does not seem to think it a sensible question. He was not really interested in that; it is not a science-fiction film. And I think this is sound. For *La Jetée*, like Marker's obviously political films (*Cuba Si!, Le Joli Mai,*

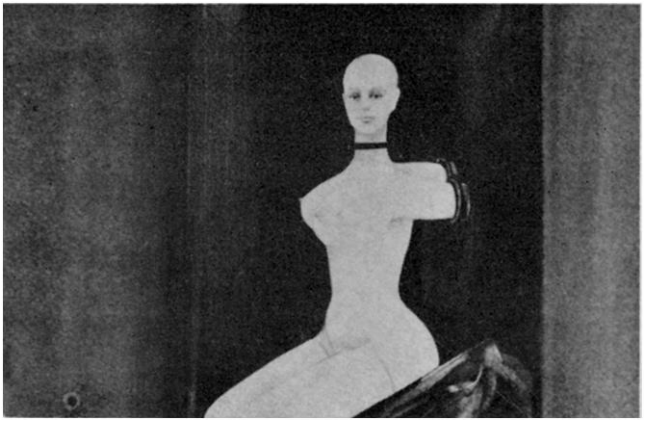
and so on) springs from our lives here now, and the threat under which we live them. There is no romanticism in Marker's portrait—no pretty views, no youthful zooming around Paris. The hero is preoccupied a good deal of the time; the girl is quiet, meditative. They do not really "do" anything; they are just alive. The overwhelming point of *La Jetée* is the simple, awesome difference between being alive and being dead.—Ernest Callenbach

TWO FILMS BY WALERIAN BOROWCZYK

Walérian Borowczyk, now aged 42, is reaching the apogee of his career as an animator. After working on several films with his fellow Pole, Jan Lenica (*Once Upon a Time, Dom, The School*), he came to work in Paris. First he collaborated with Chris Marker on *Les Astronautes,* a facetious and not entirely successful film-collage, which made use of both a live actor and animation. Then came the strange *Concert of Mr. and Mrs. Kabal,* macabre, extremely funny, and totally original in its grotesque draughtsmanship.

With *Renaissance,* Borowczyk's talent flowered. He took a very basic and rather hackneyed technical device, back-motion, and made it the mainspring of his film. A fusty tableau consisting of objects he picked up at the Paris flea market (among others a wicker basket, a skeletal clock, a prayer book, a faded family photograph, a battered doll and a dented trumpet) is shattered by a bomb. Then, one by one, each of these objects reconstitutes itself: some charred paper is transformed, leaf by leaf, into an intact book; the doll, limb by limb, resumes her former, already truncated, condition.

Les Jeux des Anges



All this may sound rather pointless. After all, back-motion (like slow-motion, quick-motion, and stop-motion) is merely a technical trick that soon loses its novelty. Cocteau, in *Le Sang d'un Poète* and *Le Testament d'Orphée,* used it like a magician; fascinated by the visual effect of someone plunging *out of* the water on to a rock, or by the poetry of a man putting petals back on to a flower, he never raised this device beyond the level of an accessory flourish, a baroque ornament. Borowczyk proceeds differently. Back-motion is the essence of *Renaissance;* through it we are able to sense the physical composition of objects.

And here one should say a word about the use of the soundtrack by Borowczyk. Few directors are more aware of or more sensitive to sound effects. While working, he likes to doodle on a miniature glockenspiel that stands on his work desk, or to immerse himself in the sensual riot of sound that is produced by his enormous Braun stereo record-player with the volume turned up full.

In *Renaissance,* he gives objects a sonic dimension. The trumpet gives an occasional pathetic squeak, and resounds tinnily as it buckles back into shape; the torn pages of the prayer book scuffle back between the covers; the shattered reeds of the wicker hamper crackle back into line. But as well as sensing very strongly the texture and composition of objects in this film, one catches something more important: a definite, though musty, whiff of an era, which conjures up a faded picture of picnics in the country, Renoir children and their dolls, the clock chiming for dinner, the family stiffly grouped together by the local photographer, Mass and the band in the park.

Borowczyk's latest and most powerful film, *Les Jeux des Anges,* had a strange genesis. The producer of many of his films, Jacques Forgeot, saw a series of watercolors that Borowczyk had

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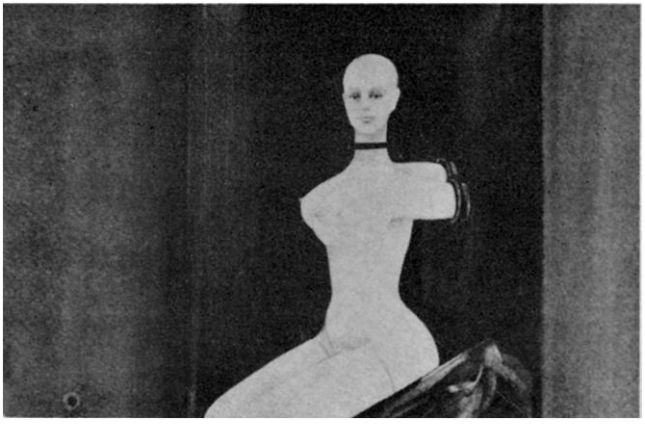

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painted for an exhibition, and suggested that he make a film out of them. Borowczyk did so, and with extraordinary dexterity, for when one sees the film one is never made aware of its static origins.

Les Jeux des Anges is a hallucinating experiment in the macabre that goes much deeper than *The Concert of Mr. and Mrs. Kabal;* and it certainly does not provoke laughter. The film begins with a diabolical and deafening train journey through a dim, almost abstract landscape. The destination: a network of strange chambers, terrifying in their bare simplicity, the walls of which are featureless except for the occasional protruding end of a pipe. This grim setting, evocative of a concentration camp, is gradually peopled with limbs, torsoes, guts, bones, angel's wings, a guillotine, and, serene and stony-hearted, a naked woman. But in this film which contains almost no straight animation (Borowczyk skilfully moves within the frames of his watercolors), the most important dynamic element, not surprisingly, is the soundtrack. Never have relatively innocuous sounds been made, by implication, so difficult to bear. For instance, Borowczyk wanted to show a series of beheadings. Rather than animate or alter his watercolors of a man with his head on the block, he expresses all on the soundtrack. We hear the terrifying rasping of a long knife on a whetstone; then, at the thud of impact, Borowczyk zip-pans to an empty chamber, and we hear (but do not see) a head bouncing helter-skelter down a chute into a box. This sequence, repeated five or six times, becomes physically unbearable.

With superb control, Borowczyk orchestrates the other elements of the soundtrack: guttural mumbo-jumbo, explosions, gratings, grindings, and thuds, all of which contrast violently with recurring snatches of triumphant organ music. The film moves gradually towards a demoniac climax: the organ pipes (or are they bundles of sawn-off bones? The drawing is purposely ambiguous) become guns, man is destroyed or destroys himself, and the film closes with the same dark and thundering journey back through the night and into nowhere.

Borowczyk is tired of making short films ("People don't look at them seriously enough," he complains), and has plans for a feature film with actors, called *Goto.* Needless to say, the setting is ambiguous and the characters are strange. One can be sure that Borowczyk's own brand of *Angst,* his sense of absurdity, and his macabre humor will guarantee us another disturbing yet invigorating journey into the world of the unknown.—PETER GRAHAM.

WATERMELON

Available after December from Film Makers Coöp, 414 Park Avenue South, New York.

This movie is a joint effort, the scenario having been written by Saul Landau and Ron Davis; the filming and editing are by Robert Nelson *(Plastic Haircut).* It was designed for Bill Graham's San Francisco Mime Troupe production, "A Minstrel Show," and although the film has had some solo showings, it takes on added significance when seen in the original context. The "Minstel Show" is designed to exploit and explode the image of the blackface darky. Traditionally a white man blackened and dressed in outlandish clothes and a kinky wig, the minstrel Negro is a caricature of the white man's idea of the lazy, fornicating, gambling, jig-dancing, joke-cracking, no-account nigger. In the Mime Troupe production, three of the six "darkies" are real Negroes—blackened and whitened to approximate the traditional mask —and in the progress of the evening, something happens to Mr. Bones. The show commences with the usual corny jokes, delivered through an exchange of question and response by an Interlocutor and his End-men. This gives way to a series of skits which become increasingly savage in their satire, both towards the white man and the Negro himself—his capacity to be duped, his foolish pride in his sexuality, his often grotesque attempts to become a part of the white culture. By stages, the minstrel darky becomes all Negroes, culminating in the menacing Blackman of razor and switchblade, against

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a setting reminiscent of Leroi Jones's "The Toilet." The effect is bizarre, and although the material is very uneven, the Troupe carries the metaphor off effectively.

The "Watermelon Film" is shown at the end of the first half of the show, immediately following a skit in which a Negro has pantomimed sexual relations and a "hang-up" dialogue with a white girl—one of the minstrel men wearing a skirt and mask. At once reminiscent of *The Blacks* and *Another Country* (which it parodies), this blackout plays upon some of the deepest tensions in the white-black antagonism. Contrast and relief is thus provided by the film, a rapid-paced montage of sequences that draw upon Pop Art and surrealism to (literally) explode another cliché—the watermelon traditionally associated with the chuckle-headed darky. During the showing of the film, the minstrels stand to one side, singing a Stephen Foster melody which soon disintegrates into an Afro-Harlem chant in which the word "watermelon" is repeated over and over, as on the screen watermelons are destroyed in every conceivable style: exploded, dropped, crushed, kicked, slashed with ice-skates, smashed by an earth-mover, trampled by a crowd, harrassed down a hillside by a gang of rowdies—the whole very reminiscent of *The Running, Jumping, and Standing Still Film.*

Filmed in color, the smashed watermelons metaphorically suggest a sort of watermelon salad *à la Sade,* the juicy pink flesh terribly close to human gore. This emphasis reaches one kind of climax when a butcher slices open a melon and pulls out handful after handful of actual viscera. Very surreal, and with a vengeance. A second kind of climax (involving a bare-breasted girl and a watermelon) is also reached, during which the audience remained very nervous and silent. Lighter comedy is provided by another series of collages, in which watermelons appear in symbolic but often unlikely places: beside an African delegate to the UN, floating among carnival balloons, on the head of a smiling African belle, etc. No one, I think, who sees this film will ever look at a watermelon again without remembering *Watermelon.* Some who see it may not be able to eat a watermelon for some time afterwards.

It must be said that the technical aspects of the film are very uneven, perhaps on purpose. The editing is skillful, although a few of the montages flash by too quickly for the scene to be fully taken in. Perhaps this is to encourage a second viewing, which is well worth the return trip. I understand that the sound track of the solo version is rough, which is unfortunate, because much of the film's effect depends on the minstrel chorus. —JOHN SEELYE

Books

MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

(By Charles Chaplin. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964. $6.95)

When Chaplin's mother visited his Hollywood mansion for the first time, she paused amid the splendor and said: "It's a pity to disturb the silence." That line might well begin and end this review, for it seems to sum up the book's general reception; but it would put the master's autobiography both in *and* out of focus. That the book is almost as revealing in its lacks as in its fulfillments should be stressed.

The first 50 pages chronicle the humiliating poverty of Chaplin's childhood—a parody of Dickens, with flashes of sweetness and light, done in the spirit of *Monsieur Verdoux.* The drunken, unproviding actor father who staggers infrequently in and out of the family circle, the demented mother, the lovable, older half-brother—the archetypes are there, well cast. The sets are authentic: the succession of workhouses, homes for indigent children where birch floggings are routine, madhouses, sinister streets, and sleazy theaters.

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The only time Chaplin's father kissed him was

just before he "died of alcoholic excess at the age of 37." (Chaplin frequently expresses disapproval of the unself-governed life, as witnessed in men like John Barrymore.) His mother, an enthralling mimic, had an antic imagination, a Rabelaisian sense of humor that endeared her to Chaplin, who is anxious to give a full sense of her charm and the pathos of her life. The fluctuations of good and bad luck in the Chaplin family are expressed in the precarious phases of the mother's mental health. But if he had cause to agree with Conrad that "life made him feel like a cornered blind rat waiting to be clubbed," Chaplin is moved to note that "some of us are struck with good luck." He tells the classic rags-to-riches story.

The theater offered him an exit from a dispiriting reality. When he was five he made his first appearance on the stage; his mother made her last in the same "routine." But not until he went on tour as a clog dancer with the Lancashire Lads when he was eight did his career really begin. At 13, he played the boy in *Sherlock Holmes;* then he did vaudeville circuits in England and in the U.S. for Fred Karno. Mack Sennett saw him, remembered him, and later brought him to Keystone to replace Ford Sterling.

If you have questions about the mysterious art of silent film comedy, plan to seek answers elsewhere. Except for a few elementary and half-hearted passes at what's expected, Chaplin seems less interested in retracing his steps as a movie-maker than fascinated by audience responses and salary and profit escalations. But then he never claims to be an artist and denies any great love of the theater. "There was a strong element of the merchant in me," says the man who made and sold toy boats when he was ten. "Theatre meant a livelihood and nothing more." As he toured the Midwest, the American spirit of enterprise dazzled him, and for a while he considered going into a different "racket." Initially, he had little respect for the movies—make a killing, then get out, was his attitude—but he soon realized that the business for him was show business. The colossal energy that *earned* him his wealth, however, was generated by pride in the quality of his work and delight in making people laugh.

Though he emphasizes the workings of the movies as an industry and his climb within it, over the resentment of directors and actors, Chaplin recalls Sennett's method affectionately: "We have no scenario," said Sennett. "We get an idea, then follow the natural sequence of events until it leads up to a chase, which is the essence of our comedy." However, Chaplin de-emphasized the chase. "Little as I knew about movies, I knew that nothing transcended personality." He recounts that banal moment when Sennett made history by instructing him to "put on a comedy make-up. Anything will do." Chaplin says: "I wanted everything a contradiction: the pants baggy, the coat tight, the hat small and the shoes large. . . . I added a small mustache, which, I reasoned, would add age without hiding my expression. . . . I had no idea of the character. But the moment I was dressed, the clothes and the make-up made me feel the person he was. I began to know him, and by the time I walked onto the stage he was fully born."

Early, he learned that he had the "ability to evoke tears as well as laughter." Thus are the drab shadows of his childhood transformed into comic gestures. He recalls the sheep that escaped from the slaughterhouse and the slap-stick chase that ended with its being taken to be killed; the child Chaplin laughed at the chase, wept over the dénouement. "That stark, spring afternoon and that comedy chase stayed with me for days; and I wonder if that episode did not establish the premise of my future films—the combination of the tragic and the comic." That many of the comedians he knew committed suicide partly inspired this double vision. The Tramp eating his shoe in *The Gold Rush* is a droll extension of the stark actuality. Improvisation, the force of personality, and the dynamic interplay of the comic and the serious are at the heart of the Commedia dell' arte as well as silent film comedy.

An obvious dissatisfaction with the book is caused by the lack of detail about Chaplin's movies. We get almost no insights into specific movies made during the Keystone, and very few during the Essanay and the Mutual periods; of the movies done at First National, we get some commentary on the making of *A Dog's Life, Shoulder Arms, The Kid,* and *The Idle Class.* The features for United Artists still have some interest for him. *A Woman of Paris* (1923) "was a great success with discriminating audiences. It was the first of the silent pictures to articulate irony and psychology"; Ernst Lubitch imitated it, we are told; and it anticipates the later, non-Tramp films. (Chaplin gives no sign of awareness of the international movie-making scene, of the work of other great directors, during his most productive years or in recent decades.) He is also fairly illuminating about *The Gold Rush* (1925), *City Lights* (1931), *Modern Times* (1936), and *The Great Dictator* (1940).

But the picture he is almost eager to discuss is *Monsieur Verdoux,* "the cleverest and most brilliant

film I have yet made." His interest, however, is more in his problems with censorship than in the conception and execution of the movie. Of *Limelight* (1953) he says: "I had fewer qualms about its success than any other picture I had ever made." (It made more money than any other, despite being boycotted in the U.S.—70% of the profits from most of his films came from outside the U.S.)

He notes a few of his abandoned projects, the most interesting of which is his scenario of *Shadow and Substance,* in which he intended to cast Joan Barry; later, he auditioned 17-year-old Oona O'Neill.

For eight pages (254-62) Chaplin disburdens himself of an assortment of reflections on the craft and on comedians, with no mention, however, of people like Harold Lloyd, Harry Langdon, and Stan Laurel, whom he knew. Here and elsewhere we get something of his method. For instance, he would order a set to be built, sit in the middle of the construction in progress, and wait for an idea that would fill the set with action. He offers some reflections on his early preference for silent movies over the new sound. We get a few comments on camera placement, or "cinematic inflection." But only a few observations are valuable.

Chaplin's pronouncements and reflections aren't restricted to the movies. "I might have become a scholar," he says, remembering childhood inclinations. But he elaborates later: "I wanted to know, not for the love of knowledge, but as a defense against the world's contempt for the ignorant." So he read Robert Ingersoll, Emerson ("Self-reliance"), Schopenhauer, Twain, Poe, Major H. Douglas and other economists; he has a habit of beginning with, "As Hazlitt says..." Near the end of the book he seems to respond to a cue (perhaps from Macauley, another of his favorites): "At this juncture, I think it appropriate to sum up the state of the world as I see it today." Now and then throughout the book he feels the necessity to offer wisdom on patriotism, nationalism, and the teddy boys, who lead him to conclude: "Man is only a half-tame animal who has for generations governed others by deceit, cruelty and violence." One of Chaplin's ideas, resembling a conception which Mann develops in *Felix Krull,* is intriguing but left unexplored: "I... developed a theory about the genius and the criminal being closely allied, both being extreme individualists."

More revealing are his comments on his loneliness and on friendship. "Much nonsense has been written about my profound melancholy and loneliness. Perhaps I have never needed too many friends—celebrity attracts them indiscriminately. I like friends as I like music, when I am in the mood." Douglas Fairbanks "was the only actor of whom I ever made a friend" because "stars among stars gave little light—or warmth." But to Fairbanks Chaplin devotes less space than to descriptions of the crowds who greeted him in London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, and Japan. Yet the man who delighted in posing on balconies, would several hours later be seeking anonymity in dark streets; in England, there is the poignant moment when he heckles a street orator from the darkness. When in London, he was quickly drawn to the slums where he grew up. (Camus once remarked on the nostalgia of poverty, which Maugham observed in Chaplin and which Chaplin denies, though his book provides evidence to the contrary.)

A man with many grievances, he tells us about his involvement in public life. In WW I, his image alone sold bonds; in WW II, he expressed his opinions as well (several speeches are quoted at length), urging Americans to support a second front in Russia (*The Great Dictator* having just been released, he acknowledges certain professional motives for his public stance, but urges deep conviction as primary). Later, he was called a Communist, but he managed to talk his way out of appearing before the Committee on Un-American Activities. His relations with the press go through a development: as the man behind the Tramp, he was hot copy; as the voice of social and political opinions, he was a target. "When I began this book I asked myself the reason for writing it. There are many reasons, but apology is not one of them. In summing up my situation, I would say that in an atmosphere of powerful cliques and invisible governments I engendered a nation's antagonism and unfortunately lost the affection of the American public."

Sometimes the book degenerates into a dreary roll call of famous names. Chaplin knew or met everybody who was somebody. But after all, he became rich and famous because, for one thing, he wanted to mingle as one of the great among the great. The light his image refracts from the luminaries amongst whom he moved is so blinding that we get little more than glimpses of the mysterious man behind the mustache.

But some of his encounters are of enduring interest. Among show people there are his relations with Bronco Billy, his opposite, who shrugged off elegance and opulence; his shy, awkward meeting with Caruso; his poignant comments on Valentino; his sadness at seeing the hard financier behind his partners at Allied Artists—America's Sweetheart,

Mary Pickford, and the All-American Boy, Douglas Fairbanks; his perceptive comments on Jackie Coogan in *The Kid;* his few observations on Eisenstein; his Buster-Keaton-like evasion of Cocteau on a steamship; his near-collaboration with Orson Welles.

He met many writers; some were among his best friends: H. G. Wells, Waldo Frank, Dreiser, Truman Capote, and James Agee. Chaplin's last image of the U. S. is also his last image of Agee: as the ship pulls away and Manhattan recedes, Agee searches in vain for Chaplin's face among the portholes.

He met many public personages; some he knew well: Lady Astor, Sir Philip Sassoon, and most of all William Randolph Hearst and Marion Davies, whose fabulous lives are described in some of the most vivid passages.

But Chaplin, who played the violin and composed his own film scores, and who felt certain affinities with dancers, preferred the company of musicians and dancers over any other group: Paderewski, Melba, Schonberg, Stravinsky, Pavlova, Nijinsky.

It seems there would be little risk in assuming that meeting or knowing his celebrated contemporaries would have some effect on his personality and perhaps his art, but Chaplin seems to respond to their light as the earth to the stars.

However, certain women manage to make a greater impact. Chaplin takes pains to show the ways in which his mother shaped his life. But several times he expresses his reluctance to feature his love life in the book. "As for sex, most of it went into my work." Women were valuable as distractions from boredom between pictures. But in his youth, his romantic attitude was somewhat Gatsby-like: he worshipped a school girl from afar; he longed for Marie Doro at 16; he was in awe of Hetty Kelly at 19. Even when he was famous, he would stand in the street outside Hetty's window—like Gatsby gazing across the bay at the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. About to return to London as a great success, he says: "Hetty was the one audience from the past I should have liked to meet again, especially under these fantastic circumstances." But just before he arrived, she died. He had a similar elusive affair with his leading lady Edna Purviance, who remained on his payroll until her death, recounted at the rather gray end of the book.

His first wife, Mildred Harris, was a sex object from the beginning. Pola Negri was an exotic pastime for a while. To his second marriage, which produced his two well-known sons, Sydney and Charles, he devotes a short paragraph; out of affection for his sons, he refuses to discuss their mother with posterity. Wife number three, Paulette Goddard, was something special for eight years. But Oona O'Neill seems to be the great lady in his life, having borne him six children; she was 19 when he married her, 27 when he took her out of the U. S. in 1953. He had affairs with several intriguing, nameless women in Venice, Paris, and New York, but one of his mistresses became quite famous and unforgettable: Joan Barry, who claimed to have borne him a child. Chaplin has retained the often ludicrous details of the trial. He offers proof that Barry was a pawn of fascists, and that J. Edgar Hoover used the incident for political revenge.

The style of the book undergoes a curious metamorphosis: from Victorian diction in the first 150 or so pages into a simpler, less pretentious prose as the book progresses. But throughout, the prose is characterized by clichés ("When the fates deal in human destiny, they heed neither pity nor justice,") and the rendering of events is frequently sentimental. He often fails to provide a chronological frame for his episodes and we become disoriented, as when we're told that parting with Goddard after eight years was a wrench. *What* eight years? He leaves many loose ends that frustrate the intent reader. Even a reader with little knowledge of Chaplin's life will sense strange disproportions. His sense of what to omit, what include, what stress, what minimize, seems faulty ("From such trivia I believe my soul was born," he says on page 16.).

Chaplin is a man of many masks: most of them out of the rag-bag of the Commedia dell' arte: the lover; the pretentious Doctor and the sententious Pantaloon (as in parts of this autobiography: he was 70 when he began it 6 years ago); a little of the braggart, El Capitano; Harlequin above all, in the Tramp, who sometimes merges with the malicious Brighella, and is ultimately transformed into Monsieur Verdoux. Intentionally and unintention-

ally, Chaplin shows himself to be vain, pompous, opinionated, spiteful, selfish, sentimental, conceited, peevish, and greedy. But he is also impulsively kind, sympathetic, and thoughtful. In recounting incidents of his life-long shyness, he is often quite charming.

Yet Chaplin remains a rather cold man. You glimspe this quality in certain photographs of the Tramp—a pinch rather than a purse of the lips, a cool stare rather than a beguiling gaze in the eyes. That element of control which in part explains his effect also suggests an eye on cold cash. But didn't Chaplin earn every penny and hasn't he a right to his wealth, his so-called arrogance, bitterness, etc? Why should anyone expect his writing to soar beyond the mediocre? Given the nature of Chaplin's greatness, which, except for his own scenarios, never lay in his writing ability, what function should such a book be expected to serve? After his autobiography has been thoroughly evaluated it will prove to be almost irrelevant to the poetic, dynamic image of that encumbered dancer, Charlie. Charlie Chaplin, the Tramp, is an immortal figure on an urn; Charles Spencer Chaplin, the autobiographer, is a flash in the pan.

The Tramp's success as an everyman figure depends upon there being *no* man behind the mask, for he is, in a profound sense, a creature of the folk-consciousness. He underwent a slow realization and articulation, and, giving him his cues, international audiences collaborated in the process. Chaplin did not premeditate the Tramp; he discovered him in the same way the comedies were once done: on the fly, almost by accident. The shape of the figure and his acts were one, perceived profoundly, responded to thoroughly in an instant. Conversely, the two figures in his later films are conscious creations: Monsieur Verdoux and the actor in *Limelight*. But isn't their fame partly explained by the charm of the incongruity between the living-out of the tramp figure and the conscious making of Verdoux? Sophisticates who found themselves creating a kind of mystique about the Tramp felt somehow justified by the acidity and cold irony of *Verdoux*.

When we expect an icon to speak to us of things commensurate to its symbolic magnitude, aren't we expecting to get at something that must remain elusive? Certain artifacts in the museums aren't to be trusted, and the Tramp is one of them. You interrogate him at your own risk—the moment your back is turned, you may feel the tip of his cane. For the benefit of all, perhaps there should be a sign, directed at both creator and audience: Do Not Disturb the Icon.—DAVID MADDEN.

DOCUMENTARY IN AMERICAN TELEVISION

(By A. William Bluem. New York: Hastings House, 1965. $8.95)

Since the advent of television, a huge amount of documentary film has been made for it, and exposed to immense audiences—nowadays on a daily basis. This volume is an attempt to bring some initial order to the record so far by tracing major lines of development, suggesting a general critical attitude, and examining some central problems. Like television itself, Bluem is harsh on anything extreme; hence he is critical of the *cinéma-vérité* work of Drew Associates on the grounds that they simply present a segment of life without trying to shape it into an easily digestible package. Disagreeably middle-brow though this view may be, nonetheless it must be remarked that TV *has* indeed gained an enviable sense of public confidence by its "nonextreme" policies. The networks may not be the *New York Times*, but then they're not the *Oakland Tribune* or *L. A. Times* or our other laughing-joke newspapers either. At least TV presents the news that fits on a national scale so massive as to permit cool presentation of materials most newspaper publishers would gag at. I think this is useful —though not in the interests of anything we might consider "art."

Bluem begins with a survey of the historical background: documentary still-photography projects of the thirties, photojournalism, the *March of Time*, the Grierson tradition, radio documentary. He then recounts the beginnings of news documentary at the various networks, and brings us up to date through the theme documentary compilations such as *Victory at Sea*, and the narrative biography as practiced by Wolper and others. Bluem is not concerned with criticism of individual programs. (Though, for instance, he understands that the Kennedy-Wallace confrontation in *Crisis* was inevitably managed news, and that the earnest worrying done about "invasion of executive privacy" was so naïve as to be farcical.)

Although this book does not initiate a serious critical study of television, its listing of outstanding TV documentaries and sources from which 16mm prints can be obtained will help overcome one of the principal obstacles to such study—the maddening difficulty of catching programs, or of ever seeing anything twice. We can hope that now, in the pages of Bluem's *Television Quarterly* and elsewhere, there will be some closer criticism attempted—to follow up, on a more selective and less depressingly current basis, the brave enterprise of Paul Goodman in *The New Republic*.—ERNEST CALLENBACH.

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Well, coping with them is perhaps still beyond the "revitalized cultural perspective" which Leo Lowenthal recommends to sociologists in his foreword. But if there is ever to be a useful sociology of the mass media, they must be confronted. A chi-square test may be a thing of beauty, and an IBM 360 even more so, but films are cultural artifacts which arise out of conventions and traditions and personalities and complex industrial situations—all of which have a certain specific historical weight, and all of which must be understood in some detail if we are to make sense out of what has happened. It does not get us very far to learn, with Huaco, that the plots of various German films "suggest that sex and eroticism are destructive." So what? If we are to make sense out of such aspects of film, we must investigate the *functions* of such a theme: both what it meant in the German society of the time, and how film-makers utilized it. This is not an easy task; if it were, the writing of film history would not be such a rare and solitary activity.

Huaco's basic methodology is straightforward, and this is rare and praiseworthy. But he does not always avoid difficult problems of causation. Noting the literary and artistic background of the German directors, he writes that it "seems to have been a cause" of what historians have called the theatrical and painterly qualities of their films. But it would make equal sense to say that the producers sought out such directors because they wanted such qualities; we must turn to the historical record if we hope to understand where the impulse really came from. Are the qualities of Hollywood films caused by the characters of their directors? One hopes not, in any direct sense. Yet in indirect ways they are certainly related; and there are opportunities for rich role-studies in the film world—of how aspirants for the director role select themselves, how they are selected by the machinery of the industry, and influenced by the expectations prevalent where they work. Such studies could even have a very practical side, since one of the chief questions for the future of American cinema is whether the director's role can be strengthened so that he controls the making of his films more fully—ERNEST CALLENBACH.

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THE TECHNIQUE OF SPECIAL EFFECTS CINEMATOGRAPHY

(By Raymond Fielding. New York: Hastings House, 1965. $15.00)

The last word on every technical trick of the trade.

SALT OF THE EARTH
The Story of a Film

(By Herbert Biberman. Boston: Beacon Press, 1965. $5.95)

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Correspondence & Controversy

CHUSHINGURA

As manager of the Cinema Guild, I may be foolish to take exception to your dismissal of *Chushingura* under "Entertainments" (entertainments are more dependable at the box-office than art films), but *Film Quarterly* is so sententiously dedicated to art that I cannot suppress amusement at the enormity of your blunder.

Had *Chushingura,* like *Cleopatra* and *Lawrence of Arabia,* had the benefit of a multimillion dollar publicity campaign, and had the result—artistically—been a mouse, I could understand your condescending admiration of its color and production values. Though it's true that, for Japan, *Chushingura* was an elaborate production, the film has had no publicity in the Occident; the incoherent abridged version failed commercially; and —until my roadshow premiére of the complete film— *Chushingura* was, in practical terms, unknown in the United States.

You might also have considered the Cinema Guild's record: fourteen years of an art policy envied by every film society in the country. Apart from *Chushingura,* which satisfies no rational definition of a spectacular (spectacle for the sake of spectacle), we've never shown one; and for five weeks—with practically no takers—we offered those who wished to leave after two hours (before Part II began) their money back. Of the thousands who saw *Chushingura,* a large proportion came at least twice, many returned five and six times, and—in one instance—nine times.

Finally, given the circumstances of our enormously successful roadshow engagement (41 weeks, not 36, as you indicated), a less narcissistic reviewer might have suspected that there was more to this film than Occidentals could expect to grasp at a single viewing. No, "production values do not a movie make, nor pretty shots a film"; they don't necessarily unmake one either. You seem never to have got past *Chushingura's* production values and what you call pretty shots to the film's sweep, intensity and thematic depth. (The theme—the righting of a great wrong—is one for which more resonance might have been expected from a member of Berkeley's intellectual community.)

I trust that some of your readers will understand that the greater a film's cinematic quality the lamer must be any attempt to arrive at verbal equivalents. *Hamlet* and *Crime and Punishment* sound trite in synopsis; *Chushingura* differs only in that its sociology is Japanese, and thus seems fresher to Occidental eyes. What, then, is so special about the film? The answer,

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insofar as it lies within my power to supply, is that *Chushingura* draws the spectator into an unfamiliar, highly stylized, yet totally convincing, world. The 13-act drama on which it is based (the central epic of the Kabuki theater, which has held Japanese stages continuously for 260 years) has been so thoroughly transformed that no one ignorant of the source would ever guess it was a play.

Despite your strictures against its "inexact bravura," I can only reply that repeated viewings have failed to disclose to me even one shot that might be more expressive from another angle; the complex interweaving of character and theme—which amply repays several viewings—is unequalled by any film I know; and the work has sequences of unbelievable grandeur, of which the finest is one in which couriers convey the news of Lord Asano's martyrdom to his castle at Ako. In less than four minutes' screen time one feels the all-but-unbearable strain of a gruelling four-day marathon through storm and calm, mountains and flatlands. This —to my taste, the most dynamic, complexly edited sequence in film history—seems to have escaped your notice entirely.

The arrival at Ako is equally brilliant; from tumult, Inagaki cuts to pure tranquility: peasants silently watering salt fields. Another cut: to the insignia of Chamberlain Oishi. This is Lord Asano's alter-ego, the hero who will avenge his fallen master. The camera draws away from his robe to reveal him looking over a parapet. Silence, broken only by soft wind. Oishi's son enters. Their half-whispered coversation suggests the opening of *Hamlet:* it is the springboard for the action to follow.

Throughout, Inagaki refuses to underline; the meaning is always implicit in the action. During the courier sequence, Sampei Kayano's palanquin accidentally kills an old woman. Much later, when her son refuses to accept his penance, Sampei feels he can atone only by committing harakiri. He begs Oishi to release him from his blood-oath, and as a final request asks to know his true intentions. This is how we learn what until then has been uncertain—that Oishi means to go through with the vendetta. This, in its turn, leads to the breathtaking "gay quarters" sequence: informed of Sampei's suicide, Oishi is forced to hide his grief by pretending to mourn a sparrow.

How do you go about proving that a work is subtle? You tell people, and hope they'll see it for themselves. What else is there to do? Occidentals viewing *Chushingura* for the first time tend to be overwhelmed by its richness of detail. Subsequent viewings help sort out the motifs: characters cease to look alike; puzzling motivations come clear; the relationship of detail to over-all pattern emerges. This, however, in terms of meaning; most of all, one grows aware of qualities whose hallmark is nonverbal—cinematic triumphs of camera placement and moving camera; of editing, of the counterpoint of music and action, sound and silence; of perfections of script, performance and lesser elements—color, costuming, and sets. Few films possess such qualities even to a mild degree; *Chushingura* has them in such abundance that it should be sufficient to say: "Open your eyes and ears! Look; feel; allow your imagination to be touched!"

Generally speaking, this is what I hoped to accomplish in describing the film in the Cinema Guild brochure—for an audience that cannot, I think, be considered cinematically illiterate. Their response was overwhelming.

May I, in closing, be permitted to suggest—in fairness to yourself and to your readers—that another viewing of *Chushingura* might be in order?

—Edward Landberg

Reply:

My remarks on *Chushingura* were intended to be charitable, as Landberg's theater, despite some lapses, runs more good films per year than any other I know of. *Chushingura* is not a mouse, but it is not the roaring lion Landberg tries to make it seem. It is, in fact, more like a large, elegantly hairy dog: a decent if to us exotic entertainment. This, I believe, satisfactorily explains why people wanted to see Part II; there is no need to invent preposterous claims about it being a masterpiece, or to carry on like a Barnum of the art circuit. (More students go more repeatedly to see the Beatle movies; so what?)

The theme is important in Japanese culture; but to call it "the righting of a great wrong" is ridiculous —*Chushingura* is the story of a long-planned revenge of a personal humiliation, set in the context of feudal clan loyalties and suicide-obligations. To raise such a story above the confines of national tastes would require some real complexity in the characterization; and I notice that in Landberg's long letter he talks about lots else, but not this crucial lack. (Of course *Chushingura* is "well made," though the courier episode is not particularly astounding to any aficionado of Westerns with lots of running shots; and the technique Landberg raves about is indeed perfectly competent.) You prove a work is subtle by analyzing and describing its subtleties; but neither Landberg nor anybody else has been inspired to do this for *Chushingura*, and this is rather more conclusive than Landberg's statistics.—E.C.

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- THE HURRICANE
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- THE LOST PATROL
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