

Mouvedrome

TONITE

TONITE

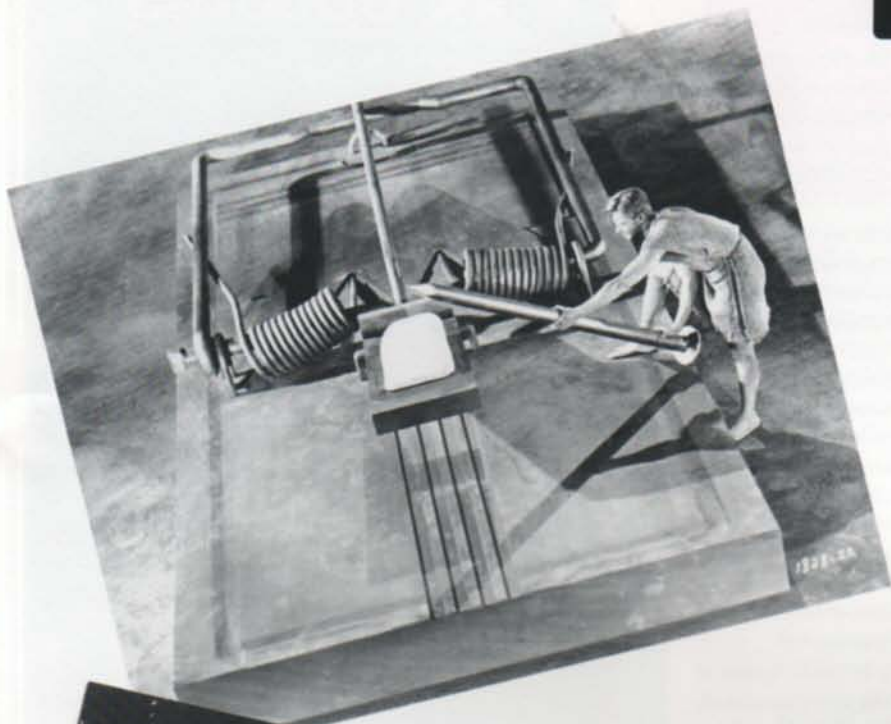
TONITE

MOVIEDROME
THE GUIDE

By Alex Cox and Nick Jones



CONTENTS



All the cult films in this collection appeared in the first three seasons of BBC2's highly popular **Moviedrome**, hosted by Alex Cox.

What is a cult film? A cult film is one that has a passionate following, but does not appeal to everyone: James Bond movies are not cult films, but chainsaw movies are. Just because a film has become a cult movie does not automatically guarantee quality. Some are very bad; others are very, very good. Some make an awful lot of money at the box office; others make no money at all. Some are considered quality films; others are exploitation movies.

One thing cult movies do have in common is that they are all genre films – for example, gangster films or westerns. They also have a tendency to slash over from one genre into another, so that a science fiction film might also be a detective movie, or vice versa. They share common themes as well, themes that are found in all drama: love, murder and greed.

All the movies chosen for **Moviedrome** – culled from the BBC library with the addition of a few personal selections – are acknowledged as cult films. Some are popular favourites, others are not, but every one has an element – a performance, musical score, opening sequence or whatever – that makes them greatly worth watching.

- 1 Ace in the Hole
- 1 Alligator
- 1 Alphaville
- 1 An American Werewolf in London
- 2 Assault on Precinct 13
- 2 Barbarella
- 2 The Big Silence (Il Grande Silenzio)
- 3 Big Wednesday
- 3 Brazil
- 3 The Buddy Holly Story
- 3 A Bullet for the General (Quien Sabé?)
- 4 The California Dolls
- 4 Dead of Night
- 4 Diva
- 5 D.O.A.
- 5 Down by Law
- 5 Electra Glide in Blue
- 6 Fat City
- 6 Five Easy Pieces
- 6 The Fly
- 6 Get Carter
- 7 Goin' South
- 7 The Good, the Bad and the Ugly
- 7 The Grissom Gang
- 8 The Hired Hand
- 8 The Honeymoon Killers
- 8 The Incredible Shrinking Man
- 9 Invasion of the Body Snatchers
- 9 Jabberwocky
- 9 Johnny Guitar
- 10 The Last Picture Show
- 10 The Long Hair of Death
- 10 The Loved One
- 11 The Man Who Fell to Earth
- 11 The Man with X-ray Eyes
- 11 Night of the Comet
- 12 One-Eyed Jacks
- 12 One from the Heart
- 12 The Parallax View
- 13 The Phenix City Story
- 13 Q – The Winged Serpent
- 13 Razorback
- 13 Rumblefish
- 14 Stardust Memories
- 14 Sunset Boulevard
- 14 Sweet Smell of Success
- 14 The Terminator
- 15 The Thing from Another World
- 15 THX 1138
- 15 Trancers
- 16 Two-Lane Blacktop
- 16 Ulzana's Raid
- 16 Walk on the Wild Side
- 17 A Wedding
- 17 The Wicker Man
- 17 Yojimbo

Deep Background

ACE IN THE HOLE



US 1951

Director: Billy Wilder
 Written by: Billy Wilder, Lesser Samuels,
 Walter Newman
 With: Kirk Douglas, Jan Sterling,
 Bob Arthur, Porter Hall,
 Frank Cady, Richard Benedict

Produced, directed and co-written by Billy Wilder in 1951, *Ace in the Hole* (also sometimes called *The Big Carnival*) is the story of a big city reporter (Kirk Douglas) who cynically exploits the plight of a man trapped in a cave on the Navajo reservation in New Mexico.

Today, reporters are generally portrayed in films as well-intentioned, saintly characters, and it's a great pleasure to see one here who's totally self-serving. Of course, he's not alone in this: under Wilder's merciless pen and directorial baton, all the characters get taken to the cleaners. They're all making money or a reputation out of this – including the man who's trapped – because 'everybody likes a break'.

Wilder is the cinematic equivalent of Vladimir Nabokov. He's completely cynical, without sentimentality, without remorse, and he's as great a craftsman with film as Nabokov was with words. Everything about his films – this one, *Some Like It Hot*, *The Apartment* and, of course, *Sunset Boulevard* (see 14) – is tuned to perfection. They are films with perfect symmetry.

It's not just that Wilder did everything himself – writing, producing and directing is enough – but he chose his collaborators with such skill that everywhere you look – at the acting, the editing, the art direction – and everything you hear (listen to the music) appears flawless. This is also the film that teaches you how to strike a match with a typewriter.



A

V

ALLIGATOR



A legend in its own lunchtime – ALLIGATOR

US 1980

Director: Lewis Teague
 Written by: John Sayles
 With: Robert Forster, Robin Rykes,
 Michael Gazzo, Dean Jagger,
 Sidney Lassick, Jack Carter

Alligator is a film based on a modern myth. Modern myths are a very popular cult species: there are films about flying saucers, about the Loch Ness monster, Bermuda Triangle, all that sort of thing, although as yet there hasn't been a movie about the 'poodle in the microwave'. Here, John Sayles and Lewis Teague offer us the oft-told story of the pet baby alligator flushed down the toilet, which takes up residence in the sewer and grows to be 100 feet long.

Sayles and Teague also collaborated on *The Lady in Red* (1979), a woman's gangster film produced by Julie Corman. *The Lady in Red* is a

somewhat classier affair, but *Alligator* is extremely entertaining. Sayles is, of course, also a director of some repute, who writes scripts such as *Alligator* so he can direct the films he wants to do: *The Return of the Secaucus Seven*, *Matewan*, *Brother from Another Planet*.

Alligator is reminiscent of the giant ant film *Them!* and Larry Cohen's *It's Alive!* There's also a reference to *The Third Man*. *Alligator* is blood-thirsty but very moral: the monster is generally politically correct in its choice of victims. Obviously the film owes a substantial debt to *Jaws*, but the alligator itself – created by the Stansbury Alligator Company and operated by Kevin Blackton and Tom Goeken – is the superior beast.

Look out for Dean Jagger – a character actor who specialised in benign old fellers like the General in *White Christmas* – in the role of the evil capitalist.

ALPHAVILLE



France/Italy 1965

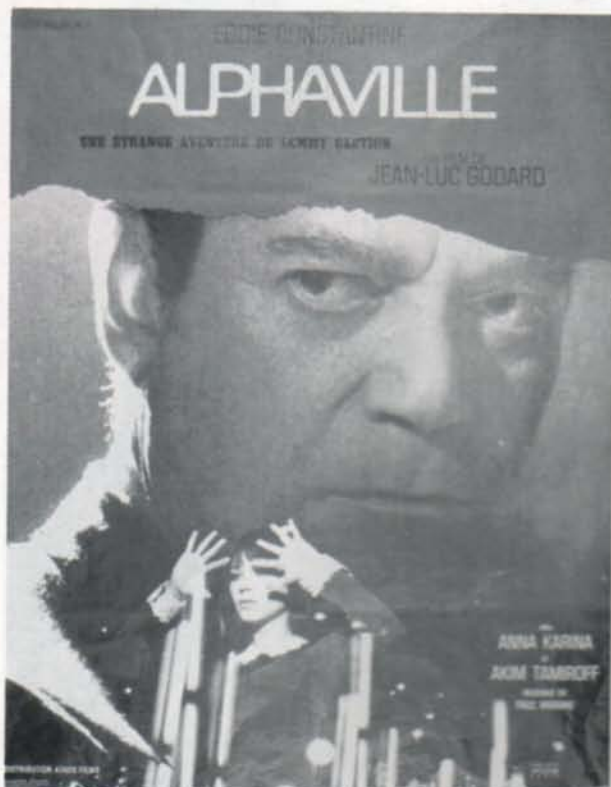
Director: Jean-Luc Godard
Written by: Jean-Luc Godard
With: Eddie Constantine,
Anna Karina, Akim Tamiroff,
Howard Vernon

Alphaville is a science fiction film noir comedy. It's the story of Lemmy Caution (Eddie Constantine), special agent, galactic traveller and reporter for *Figaro-Pravda*, who journeys to the city of Alphaville in search of the mysterious Professor von Braun. All this might make it sound like *Blade Runner*, but it's not.

The whole film was shot in black and white in Paris, without special effects. Godard was one of the big names of the French New Wave—he also directed *Breathless* and *Weekend*—and here he creates a really strong science-fiction movie out of hotel corridors and tight angles on flashing signs and such household objects as doorknobs and lightbulbs. Cameraman Raoul Coutard does an amazing job with light and dark and scenes shot through glass, constructing the frightening profile of a modern Fascist city.

This film is not to everybody's taste, of course. If you were offended by those French movies like *Hiroshima Mon Amour* or *Last Year at Marienbad* where disembodied voices talk about philosophy, you might not like this. However, the script—also by Godard—is extremely funny and, if you pay attention, it really makes its own kind of sense. It's interesting to compare *Alphaville* with *The Trial*, Orson Welles's Kafka film.

There does appear to be one mistake in the car department: Lemmy Caution claims he drives a Galaxy, but isn't the car he drives up in at the start a Mustang?



AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON

Britain 1981

Director: John Landis
Written by: John Landis
With: David Naughton, Jenny Agutter,
Griffin Dunne, John Woodvine,
Brian Glover, Lila Kaye

An American Werewolf in London is part of a very honourable cult genre: the werewolf/vampire film. The rules of these films are standardised. Vampires are blood-drinking, living corpses whose mere bite can make you one of their number. Werewolves are people who turn into wolves, or wolf-like humanoids, at every full moon, and their bite turns other humans into werewolves. Vampires can only be killed by fire, removal of the head or a stake through the heart. Werewolves can only be killed by a silver bullet or the SAS.

An American Werewolf in London was directed by John Landis, an American whose most notable cult feature is *The Blues Brothers*. *American Werewolf* was influenced by *Dead of Night* (see 4), the classic 1945 British horror film,



and it contains every conceivable song in which the word 'moon' appears. It features a nice cameo by Mr Frank Oz—Muppets genius and director of the very funny *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*—as Mr Collins, the man from the US Embassy. You can also spot Rik Mayall playing chess in a pub called The Slaughtered Lamb, and Brian Glover, who is a very good actor.

It's a weird mixture of naive comedy and apocalyptic violence with an abrupt ending. If you sit through all the credits, you will see that the film is dedicated to 'Their Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales on the occasion of their marriage'. Only an American could be that patriotic.



ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13

US 1976

Director: John Carpenter

Written by: John Carpenter

With: Austin Stoker, Darwin Joston,

Laurie Zimmer, Martin West,

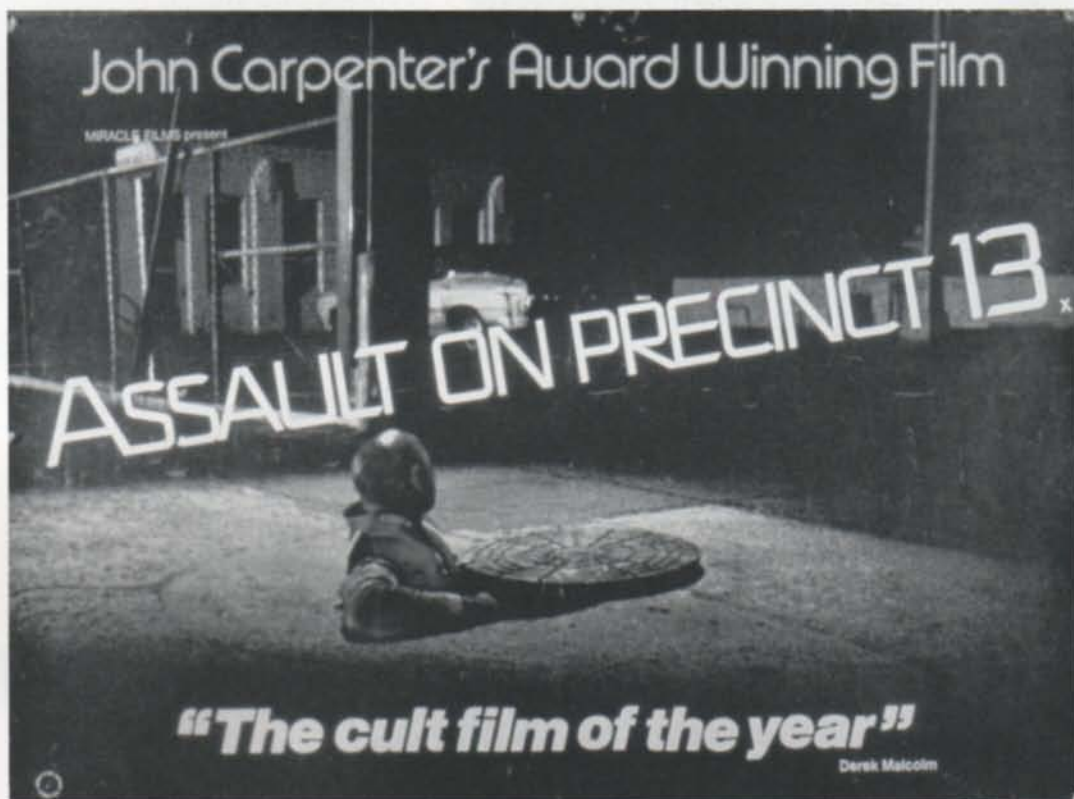
Tony Burton, Charles Cyphers

Assault on Precinct 13 was the second film directed by John Carpenter. It has a tremendous cult reputation, as has his first, *Dark Star*, which he directed and co-wrote with Dan O'Bannon.

In *Assault on Precinct 13*, Carpenter goes it alone. Well, not alone exactly. The film is a complicated series of borrowings from other films – in particular, *Rio Bravo* and the most inspirational of all cult movies, *Night of the Living Dead*. Carpenter also borrows lines of dialogue from Sergio Leone's *Once upon a Time in the West*. In this sense, the film is the cultists' dream: 'Charles Bronson said that to Henry Fonda' you can hear them cry: 'That's what Angie Dickinson told John Wayne!' Some of the lines that Carpenter made up himself aren't bad, either – especially 'Why would anybody shoot at a police station?' – but overall the tone is real pastiche. Carpenter also wrote the music and did the editing under the pseudonym 'John T. Chance'. No prizes for guessing which John Wayne film that name came from.

Now that we've established its cultural pedigree, maybe I can join the loyal opposition and say that *Assault on Precinct 13* has its flaws. The acting is awful. So are the costumes. There are only two women in the film and they both wear identical sweaters. They have identical shapes, too.

For me, John Carpenter's best film is *They Live!*, too, degenerates into a mush of running, jumping, shooting, chasing, but its first half is a genuinely weird and interesting critique of consumerism and yuppie-dom from a science-fiction viewpoint.



"Why would anybody shoot at a police station?" – ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13



THE BIG SILENCE

(Il Grande Silenzio)



Speak softly and carry a big gun—THE BIG SILENCE

Italy 1969

Director: Sergio Corbucci

Written by: Sergio Corbucci, Petilli,
Amendola, B. Corbucci

With: Jean-Louis Trintignant,
Frank Wolff, Klaus Kinski,
Luigi Pistilli, Mario Brega,
Vaneeta McGee

Sergio Corbucci was also the director of the cult western *Django*, which was banned in Britain for many years. Although *The Big Silence* is his best film, it has never been shown publicly here or in the United States. It's easy to see why. The film, like most Italian westerns, is incredibly bleak and pessimistic; but worse, it has the most horrible ending of any film I've ever seen. It was considered so strong that the producers asked Corbucci to shoot another. Apparently, that version played in certain Middle Eastern countries, where action films are popular but they have to have a happy ending.

There was another reason for the film's suppression, though. When it came out in 1969, *The Big Silence* was extremely popular in Italy and Germany and especially in France. It stars the French actor Jean-Louis Trintignant as 'Silence', a mute gunfighter, and there was talk in Europe that Clint Eastwood was going to buy the rights and recreate the role. But he didn't. What he did do was take the external trappings of *The Big Silence*—the snow, the costumes, even the hero's hat and peculiar gun—and put them in a completely boring 1972 cowboy film that he produced called *Joe Kidd* directed by John Sturges.

The beginning of *The Big Silence* is a little ragged, but bear with it. Once you're aboard the stagecoach with Trintignant and Klaus Kinski—who plays the palest murderer-out-west—you're in for an amazing ride. The music is by Ennio Morricone; it's a great and very unusual score.

BARBARELLA

Italy/France 1967

Director: Roger Vadim

Written by: Terry Southern

With: Jane Fonda, John Phillip Law,
Anita Pallenberg, Milo O'Shea,
David Hemmings

Barbarella is among the illustrious company of *Modesty Blaise* and *Fritz the Cat* in being a movie based on a comic strip. It was directed by Roger Vadim, a Frenchman, and it stars a young ingenue from America, his then wife Jane Fonda.

Vadim is one of those directors who 'loves women'. In 1956, he made a film called *And God Created Woman* starring Brigitte Bardot, and he liked it so much that, in 1987, he made it again, this time starring Rebecca de Mornay. He's not really a good director; he's sort of like Polanski but without the pain and the brain. But *Barbarella* is not a bad film. It's entertaining, has good sets, very good costumes (Miss Fonda's were designed by Paco Rabanne). It also has a lot of very good actors in it, including Milo O'Shea, David Hemmings in the role of Dildano, Marcel Marceau and Anita Pallenberg, who you might recall was one of Mick Jagger's roommates in *Performance*. The screenwriter—well, eight of them are listed in the credits, but the person listed first is Terry Southern, the American who wrote the novels *Candy* and *The Magic Christian* and the screenplays for the film version of the latter and for *Lolita* and *Dr. Strangelove*.

Apparently Jane Fonda still likes *Barbarella* and stands by it. I wonder why?



BIG WEDNESDAY

US 1978

Director John Milus

Written by John Milus, Dennis Aaberg

With Jan-Michael Vincent, William Katt,

Gary Busey, Patti D'Arbanville,

Lee Purcell, Darrell Fetty



Surf's up - BIG WEDNESDAY

Big Wednesday is a film about the big score in its purest form - three American surfers in search of the perfect wave. It was critically unpopular when it first came out, accused of being grandiose and pretentious - which it is. But a lot of good films are grandiose and pretentious, including *Citizen Kane*.

John Milus worked on the screenplay for *Magnum Force*, co-wrote *Apocalypse Now*, and co-wrote and directed a magnificent film called *Red Dawn*. A good director, and very highly regarded, he has the reputation for being the most right-wing film director in Hollywood, which is rather like being the tallest player on a basketball team. I don't know if he really is; I only saw a photograph of him one time and he seemed a fairly normal guy, except that he was wearing a Green Beret uniform. I think he's upfront about the fact that he's a loony though, and we should respect him for that.

This film is based on his early days, because in his youth he was a surfer; when you see his name in the titles, the photograph that accompanies it is of Milus and some friends with their boards. Maybe one of the reasons why the film wasn't popular with the critics was that the critics weren't surfers. But if you like the ocean, if you admire the guys who get up really early in the morning and go out where it's cold and wet, you might like *Big Wednesday*. It's Milus's *American Graffiti*.

When Gary Busey played the lead in *The Buddy Holly Story* (see 3), he taught himself to sing and play guitar. He learned to swim and surf for *Big Wednesday*...

non tue wed

BRAZIL

Britain 1985

Director Terry Gilliam

Written by Terry Gilliam, Tom Stoppard, Charles McKeown

With Jonathan Pryce, Robert de Niro, Katherine Helmond, Ian Holm, Bob Hoskins, Michael Palin

Brazil is the film that Michael Radford's 1984 should have been. It has all the atmosphere and preoccupations of Orwell's book, plus references to heavy metal comics, Eisenstein and *Mad* magazine. Gilliam said, when asked where the story takes place, 'Somewhere on the Los Angeles/Belfast border'.

Gilliam began his career as a cartoonist, but made his reputation as the inventor of the cutout animation on *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. He is a skilled visualist. (*Batman* was shot by Roger Pratt, who photographed *Brazil* for Gilliam; it looks almost identical, only not as good.) Gilliam is also a skilful director of actors. How can this be, in one who comes not from the theatre but from the drawing board? Gilliam's answer: You just cast it right and then the actors do the work.

Gilliam's contract with the Large & Nameless Studio said that the film was to be a maximum of 2 hours and 5 minutes long. When Gilliam submitted a cut that ran to 2 hours and 11 minutes,

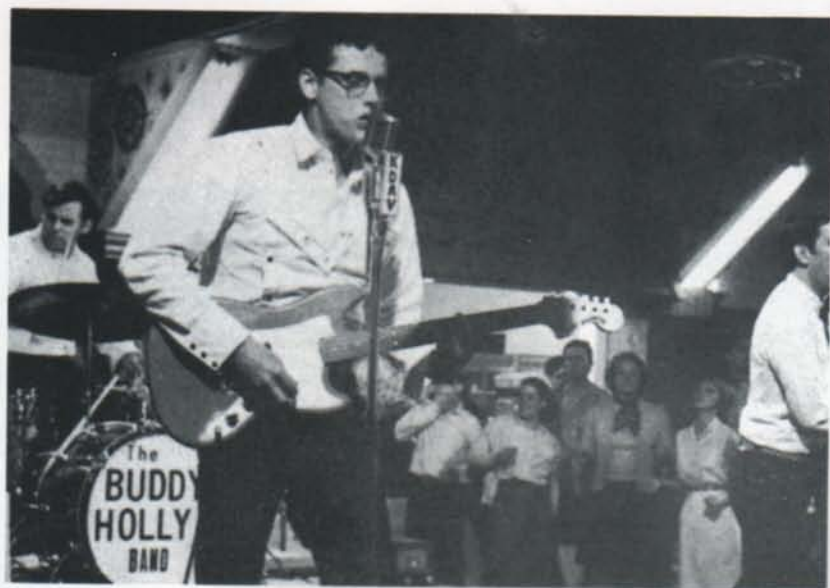


Uplifting experience - BRAZIL

the sensitive executives announced that they were going to re-edit the film, take out the nasty and the naughty bits, and release it at a length of 90 minutes. The same fate had befallen Orson Welles' *The Magnificent Ambersons*, George Cukor's 1954 version of *A Star Is Born*, Jules Dassin's *The Naked City*, John Huston's *The Red Badge of Courage*, Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (see 9) and most of Sam Peckinpah's films.

Brazil didn't get a wide release in the United States, but Gilliam did manage to prevent the recutting of his film. By going to war with the studio executives in the pages of *Variety*, Gilliam made the executives look stupid and won a Los Angeles critics' award for himself and his film.

THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY



Clean-cut control - THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY

US 1978

Director: Steve Rash

Written by: Robert Giller

With: Gary Busey, Maria Rochwine,
Don Stroud, Charles Martin
Smith, Jerry Zarembo

The Buddy Holly Story is a 'rockumentary' - a term that was, I think, invented for the very funny bogus documentary *This is Spinal Tap*. However, it's always possible that, like 'docu-dramas', rockumentaries have been around since the beginning of time.

The Buddy Holly Story is, of course, about the Texas rock 'n' roller, whose band The Crickets was the first white group to play the Apollo Theatre in Harlem. This is just one of the many interesting facts that I learned about Buddy Holly and The Crickets solely from watching *The Buddy Holly Story*.

Buddy Holly is played by Gary Busey, who starred in *Big Wednesday* (see 3). He does a very good job with our hero, who's a clean cut, likable control freak.

If there's a problem with the rockumentary genre, it's that there are lots of musical numbers during which we cut between the performer and the people watching. Now this may work if it's Iggy Pop, or an incredible imitation of Iggy; but if the subject is Buddy Holly or Richie Valens, the technique doesn't exactly set the house on fire.

I don't know why Hollywood insists on making rockumentaries about the likes of Valens and Holly, when there are people such as Little Richard and Elvis who are so much darker and more interesting and perverse. Perhaps the reason why this film and *La Bamba* got made, and the others didn't, was just because, like James Dean, Holly and Valens died young, thereby guaranteeing themselves cult status.



A BULLET FOR THE GENERAL

(Quien Sabe?)

Italy 1966

Director: Damiano Damiani

Written by: Salvatore Laurani,

Franco Solinas

With: Gian Maria Volonté, Klaus Kinski,

Martine Beswick, Lou Castel,

Jaime Fernandez, Andre Checchi

A Bullet for the General - original title: *Quien Sabe?* - was directed in 1966 by Damiano Damiani, a politically oriented director who intended it to be a commentary on United States intervention in Latin America.

It's the story of Chunchu, a romantic outlaw riding on the coat-tails of the Mexican Revolution, and Bill Tate, an itinerant gringo who hooks up with Chunchu for mysterious ends. It's nice that the film is pretty clear about the gay attraction between Bill and Chunchu; westerns are usually a bit more reticent about their 'manly men'. Indeed, while masquerading as a shoot-'em-up, the film is very smart and beautifully done. The art director was Sergio Canevari, and the script was co-written by Franco Solinas, who was also responsible for the scripts for *Burn* and *The Battle of Algiers*. The soundtrack - supervised by Ennio Morricone but written by Luis Enrique Bacalov - is great. Although set in Mexico, the film was shot on location in Spain.



Backs to the wall - A BULLET FOR THE GENERAL

It stars Gian Maria Volonté, who was, of course, the bad guy in the 'Dollar' movies, and Lou Castel, an American expatriate actor who worked with Pasolini and appeared in Wim Wenders' *The American Friend*. *A Bullet for the General* also features another spirited performance by Klaus Kinski. Martine Beswick, who plays Adelita, was later to play the female half of the 1971 Hammer horror film *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde*.

STILLS DOLLS

THE CALIFORNIA DOLLS

US 1981

Director Robert Aldrich

Written by Mel Frahman

With: Peter Falk, Vicki Frederick,
Laurene Landon, Burt Young,
Tracey Reed, Utaalme
Bryant-King

The California Dolls is a road movie about women's tag-team wrestling. It was directed in 1981 by Robert Aldrich, who also did *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*, *Hush... Hush Sweet Charlotte* and other 'women's films', as well as *The Dirty Dozen* and *The Grissom Gang* (see 7).

A film called *The California Dolls* about tag-team wrestling sounds about as exploitative as it can be, but fear not. Lurking behind the crass premise is a good film, well acted by Peter Falk, Vicki Frederick and Laurene Landon, about how horrible and grim and frustrating it is to drive around the United States in a run-down Cadillac promoting women's tag-team wrestling. And lurking in the background, ready to buy up the winning package, are the Japanese.

Like all road movies, this one is about America and the death of the American dream. But unlike most other road movies, it isn't elitist or obscure. All three of the main characters are honest people with jobs to do and so are their opponents.

The stunt fighting is pretty good, at least for a wrestling match. And the script, by Mel Frahman, asks all the good Peckinpah questions: How do you hang on to self-respect in a corrupt society? What is of value besides money and greed? *The California Dolls* was originally entitled *All the Marbles...* – an American expression which means 'winner takes all' or 'playing for keeps'.

Look out for the cardboard extras during the crowd scenes.



Tagging along for the ride – THE CALIFORNIA DOLLS

DIVA

France 1981

Director Jean-Jacques Bénéix

Written by Jean-Jacques Bénéix,
Jean Van Hamme

With: Wilhelmina Wiggins Fernandez,
Frédéric Andrei, Richard
Bohringer, Thuy An Luu,
Jacques Fabbri, Chantal Deruez

Diva is just the sort of film that American movie critics love: big on style and short on substance. And, of course, because it's French. It's the kind of film that gets called 'scintillating', or 'fabulous, frothy fun'. It doesn't, however, have any real passion, nor any acting worthy of note. It doesn't have a theme or any real direction, but what it does have is art direction. It's the only film I've ever seen where a whole sequence has been designed around a packet of cigarettes – the colour of the walls, the set decoration, the costumes, everything exists to complement a packet of Gitanes.

D.O.A.

US 1949

Director: Rudolph Maté
Written by: Russell Rouse, Clarence Greene
With: Edmond O'Brien, Pamela Britton,
Luther Adler, Beverly Campbell,
Neville Brand, Lynn Baggett

D.O.A. was made in 1949, and is unusual for a cult film because they rarely retain their cult status for more than 40 years. *D.O.A.* is particularly interesting because, like *The Fly* (see 6) or *The Blob* or *The Thing from Another World* (see 15), it has recently been remade (in 1988 by the creators of 'Max Headroom'). It's also noteworthy as an example of the *film noir*; a French term used to describe the pessimistic thrillers made in the United States after the Second World War. *Film noirs* were cheaply made, had impenetrable plots, were shot mostly on location (in this case, Los Angeles and San Francisco) and are highly revered today, especially by the makers of the remakes.

D.O.A. has a great premise, which I will not spoil by revealing to you, and stars Edmond O'Brien, who was in many *film noirs* and action films, most notably *The Wild Bunch*. *D.O.A.* was directed by Rudolph Maté and produced by Leo C. Popkin, both of whom should be shot for including the most awful musical effect ever heard in a film. It happens every time the hero sees a pretty girl, and it's incredibly irritating. (The rest of the music is by Dimitri Tiomkin, who composed some great scores, including *High Noon*.) I don't know why they did it, but it's really annoying. The only solution is to jump up and turn the sound down on your TV set every time you see a pretty woman.



The cup that cheers — *D.O.A.*

ELECTRA GLIDE IN BLUE

US 1973

Director: James William Guercio
Written by: Robert Boris
With: Robert Blake, Billy 'Green' Bush,
Mitchell Ryan, Jeannine Riley,
Elisha Cook Jr.

'Electra Glide' is the name of a full-dress Harley Davidson motorcycle that was manufactured in the United States. A few years back, all motorcycle cops over there used to ride Harleys, but in the 1970s, the Harley Davidson MC Corporation fell upon hard times, and now most American cops ride Japanese bikes, which they call 'rice burners'.

No matter — this is a fairy story about the last honest motorcycle cop in Monument Valley. Monument Valley is on the Navaho Indian Reservation in northern Arizona — a sacred place. John Ford discovered it and shot his westerns there; nowadays, they use it to shoot car commercials. *Electra Glide in Blue* was directed by

blue

DOWN BY LAW

US 1986

Director Jim Jarmusch

Written by Jim Jarmusch

With: Tom Waits, John Lurie,

Roberto Benigni, Nicoletta

Braschi, Ellen Barkin, Billie Neal

All of Jim Jarmusch's films are sort of the same, which is not meant as an insult, since they're completely unlike anybody else's. He's probably the most original director currently working in the United States — along with Spike Lee, of course. Both men seem able to work in black and white whenever they like (a very rare honour), and, interestingly, both of them remain in the vicinity of New York and only visit Hollywood extremely rarely.

Jarmusch's films are about the conflict between the Old World and the New. They're full of Europeans, often Eastern Europeans, beset with language difficulties, who encounter American culture and become catalysts for a series of bizarre, deadpan events. Jarmusch's favourite film-maker is Aki Kaurismaki, the Finnish director of *Hamlet Goes Business* and of *Leningrad Cowboys Go America*, in which Mr Jarmusch plays a used car salesman.



High-life, low-life — DOWN BY LAW

Down by Law was photographed by Robby Muller, the Dutch cameraman who shot most of Wim Wender's movies as well as *Repo Man* and *To Live and Die in L.A.*, and he also worked on Jim's latest movie *Mystery Train*. Not to beat about the bush, he's one of the best cinematographers in the world.

Like another of Jarmusch's movies, *Stranger than Paradise*, *Down by Law* exists according to its own rules, and you may as well just sit back and enjoy an elegant and clever film made in the classic style unknown to pop-primo directors. I must also add that it's very funny, thanks mostly to the presence of the great Italian comedian Roberto Benigni, here making his first appearance in an English-language film.

AN AMERICAN MOVIE
BY A NEW DIRECTOR
JAMES WILLIAM GUERCIO



Electric Blue
IN BLUE

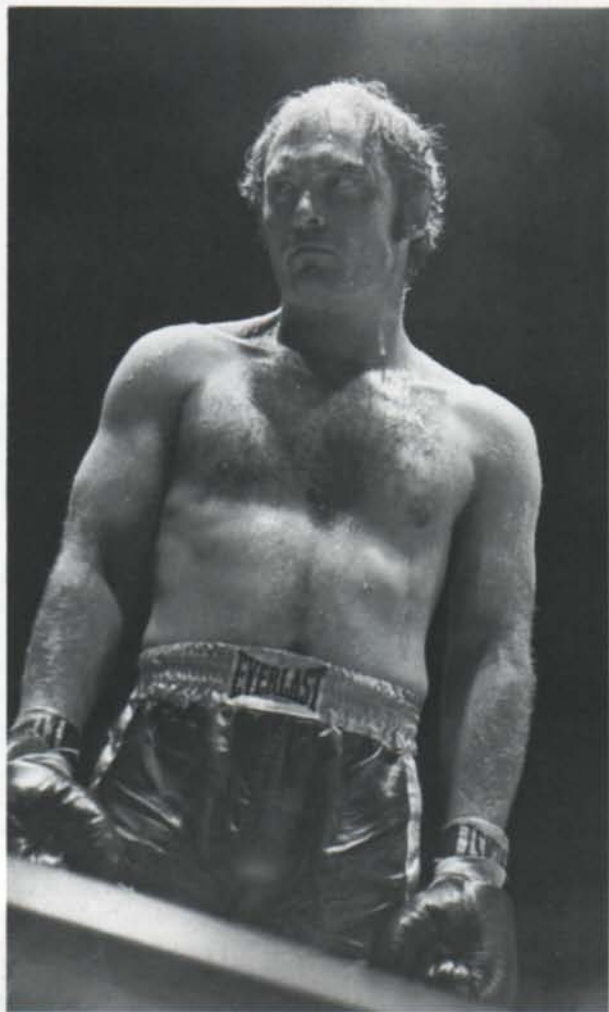
A JAMES WILLIAM GUERCIO FILM. MUSIC BY CHICAGO. COSTUME DESIGNER: MARGARET BLANE. EDITOR: GREGG DEERY. PRODUCTION AND DIRECTED BY JAMES WILLIAM GUERCIO. SCREENPLAY BY ROBERT BLOKE. BASED UPON THE NOVEL BY ALBERT HERRON AND RUPERT HULL. MUSIC COMPOSED BY JAMES WILLIAM GUERCIO. Casted Artists.

Original Motion Picture Soundtrack on cassette and CD. PG-13 Restricted Under 13 Requires Adult Accompaniment. The US Copyright Office. Copyright © 1986.

an American, James William Guercio, formerly the manager of the mellow rock band Chicago. It stars Robert Blake, who is the same height as Alan Ladd to the quarter inch. It was filmed by Conrad Hall who also shot *Fat City* (see 6). Today, Conrad Hall shoots bank commercials in Monument Valley.

The film is an interesting one. It's sort of the cops' response to *Easy Rider*, particularly at the end. It was also very influenced by a gay film, *Scorpio Rising*, directed by Kenneth Anger. Guercio never made another film after *Electra Glide in Blue*: he retired to a ranch in Colorado and was not seen again. A pity, because this is a good film, especially if you like motorcycles.





The ring cycle - FAT CITY

US 1972

Director: John Huston

Written by: Leonard Gardner

With: Stacy Keach, Jeff Bridges,

Susan Tyrrell, Candy Clark,

Nicholas Colasanto, Art Aragon

Fat City is a film about small-time boxers in the town of Stockton, California. It has great acting, a great script, and everything about it is totally understated. Unlike, for example, Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull*, which is a grandiose boxing movie of epic proportions, everything about *Fat City* is very minimal. It has almost no boxing in it at all; most of the 'action' of the film, which is a study of character, takes place in conversations.

Fat City was directed by John Huston, one of the great American directors, who made *The Maltese Falcon*, *The African Queen*, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* among others. He was also an actor of some repute - you probably remember him in *Chinatown* - and early in his career, he was a middle-weight prize fighter. He had an amazing sense of humour - so much so that his last film, made while he was dying of emphysema, is called *The Dead*. A lot of his films deal not with people in victory but people in defeat. He was a great director of actors - in this case, Stacy Keach, Jeff Bridges and Susan Tyrrell. Normally, in movies such as *Raging Bull*, when things are difficult, people behave very badly towards each other, shouting at each other, punching each other out. However, in *Fat City*, the worse things get, the more people struggle to be kind to one another, to be nice - which is interesting, given that we live in nasty times.

FIVE EASY PIECES

US 1970

Director: Bob Rafelson

Written by: Adrien Joyce

With: Jack Nicholson, Karen Black,
Susan Anspach, Lois Smith,
Billy 'Green' Bush, Ralph Waite

Five Easy Pieces is an American film that was made in 1970 by BBS, Bert Schneider's production company. Schneider had been the producer of *Easy Rider*, made the previous year. *Five Easy Pieces* was directed by Bob Rafelson, who had had a hand in the editing of *Easy Rider*, and it stars Jack Nicholson who, of course, played the Southern lawyer in *Easy Rider*. Both films were shot by Laszlo Kovacs. Like *Easy Rider*, *Five Easy Pieces* is a road movie of sorts, but unlike the motorcycle film, which is a pretty epic thing about the big themes, *Five Easy Pieces* is very intimate and understated.

It's very rare for an American film to tell a story about the class system. The hero Bobby (Nicholson) is a man who has rejected his family,



Rebel rouser - FIVE EASY PIECES

FAT CITY

who are wealthy artists, and chosen to become a member of the proletariat. That sounds a little pompous, but it is a phenomenon that has affected artists from George Orwell to William Burroughs. It's all the more pointed because American cinema at this time (the 1960s and 1970s) really did tend to exalt the working classes - just look at the characters played by Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda in *Easy Rider* and by Nicholson in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *The Last Detail* - whereas today it glorifies the bourgeoisie.

The Americans really used to make great films, and this is one of them. It has a fantastic script, great performances and a famous restaurant scene...

THE FLY

US 1958

Director: Kurt Neumann
 Written by: James Clavell
 With: Vincent Price, Al Hedison,
 Patricia Owens, Herbert
 Marshall, Kathleen Freeman,
 Betty Lou Gerson

Made in 1958, *The Fly* stars Vincent Price, who's a very, very good actor. He's been in a great many films, almost always horror films, and notably as the star of the whole of Roger Corman's Edgar Allan Poe series.

The Fly is part science fiction and part horror. It's one of a whole sub-genre of science-fiction films that were made in the 1950s in the aftermath of the atomic bomb. The theme of these films is pretty constant: science gone wrong. They're the sorts of movies where, early on, a scientist will say, 'Humanity need never want nor fear again' and, immediately after that,



Losing his head - THE FLY

unleashes a huge monster. In the United States, films such as *Them!*, *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (see 8) and *Forbidden Planet* all skirted around the same theme. In Japan, they made the huge series of *Godzilla* movies, which continues to this day. Over here, around about the same time, we were doing the *Quatermass* TV series and, later, the *Quatermass* films.

The Fly was remade recently by David Cronenberg, with lots of Hollywood production values, a very big budget and very, very graphic and grisly special effects. Although the middle section of the original movie is rather boring, I don't think anything in the Cronenberg film compares with the truly bizarre climax of the 1958 version.

GET CARTER

Britain 1971

Director: Mike Hodges
 Written by: Mike Hodges
 With: Michael Caine, Britt Ekland,
 John Osborne, Ian Hendry,
 Brian Mosley, Geraldine Moffatt

Get Carter is a nasty British gangster film. For some reason, all British movie gangsters are extremely nasty - from Richard Attenborough's Pinky Doyle in *Brighton Rock* in 1947 through Richard Burton's and Bob Hoskins' anti-heroes in, respectively, *Villain* (1971) and *The Long Good Friday* (1980), up to and including *The Krays* (1990). All our gangster heroes (unlike Edward G. Robinson or Jean Paul Belmondo) are schizoid, sadistic arseholes who shoot people in the kneecaps and sentimentalise about their mums. Rather like the real thing, in fact.

Jack Carter, a racketeer from London, goes up north to Newcastle to attend his brother's funeral and wreak 'orrific vengeance on the Geordies who did him in. Carter is played by Michael Caine, who's really good as the fastidious brute, investigating an unseemly trail of cover-ups, bribes, double-crosses and sudden violence. He is an evil man; the only difference between him and his adversaries is that they are not as self-righteous as he. In that way, *Get Carter* resembles *High Plains Drifter* (in which Clint Eastwood pretends to save a western town in order to destroy it) or a Jacobean revenge play.



Rough justice - GET CARTER

On the train up north, Carter reads *Farewell My Lovely* but he's no Philip Marlowe. Nor is he even a Yojimbo, Kurosawa's samurai hired assassin in the film of the same name (see 17). *Get Carter* was directed by Mike Hodges in an energetic early 1970s' style, at a time when American studios were investing heavily in British films. As well as splendid Newcastle locations, it features cameos by Ian Hendry (as Eric Poole, the scheming chauffeur) and the noted playwright John Osborne in the role of Mr Big.



GOIN' SOUTH

US 1978

Director: Jack Nicholson
Written by: John Herman Shiner,
Al Ramrus, Charles Shyer,
Alan Mandel
With: Jack Nicholson, Mary
Steenburgen, Christopher Lloyd,
John Belushi, Veronica Cartwright,
Danny de Vito

Goin' South was the second film Nicholson directed, the first being *Drive, He Said*. His third directorial effort, *The Two Jakes*, comes out this year. *Goin' South* is a product of the old Nicholson/BBS gang who made *Easy Rider* (see *Five Easy Pieces*, 6). The cameraman was Nestor Almendros, the producers Harold Schneider and Harry Gittes, who lent his name to the character of J. J. Gittes in *Chinatown*.

The film was shot on John Wayne's old ranch-cum-movie-set 'La Joya' in the Mexican state of Durango. It's similar in some ways to Arthur Penn's film *The Missouri Breaks*, in which Nicholson acted two years before, and, to be honest, it suffers from the comparison. As a director, Nicholson isn't really 'up there' with Penn, and *Goin' South* also lacks the extraordinary presence of Marlon Brando, who played the transvestite Irish bounty killer in the former film. I think another problem is that, by 1978, the western was just played out. The genre had descended into a slough of despond and uncertainty from which it still hasn't emerged.

What gives *Goin' South* its cult status is the opportunity it gives us to watch Nicholson and friends (including the comedians John Belushi and Danny de Vito) having fun. Intermittently it looks good, although Almendros falls into the trap of the Exceedingly Dark Interiors popularised by Clint Eastwood and Bruce Surtees, which are no doubt *my artistico* but you can't always tell what's going on.

The cast perform bravely in a bold *com-media dell'arte* style, making a heroic effort to overcome the fact that they all seem to have bad colds...



In the noose—GOIN' SOUTH

th

THE GRISSOM

US 1971

Director: Robert Aldrich
Written by: Leon Griffiths
With: Kim Darby, Scott Wilson,
Tony Musante, Robert Lansing,
Connie Stevens, Irene Dailey

When he wanted to, Robert Aldrich could be an old style tough-guy director. His most popular work is probably *The Dirty Dozen*, although he also directed *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* and *The California Dolls* (see 4). He made one great film: *Kiss Me Deadly*, a 1950s film noir about a stolen nuclear bomb. He's the sort of director that gets called 'efficient' or 'a good craftsman' — that is, stylistically his films don't break new ground, but they have good stories.

The Grissom Gang is an efficient film. It was made in 1971 at the tail end of the Bonny & Clyde gangster cycle, which also included *Bloody Mama*, *Crazy Mama* and *Boxcar Bertha*. It's based on the novel *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* by James Hadley Chase. *No Orchids* was originally made as a feature in 1948: it was banned in Britain for many years, and was the subject of a vituperative attack by the writer George Orwell. In *The Grissom Gang*, as in many of his films, Aldrich see-saws between outright obnoxiousness and a certain sensitivity.



THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY



**For Three Men
The Civil War Wasn't Hell.
It Was Practice!**

CLINT EASTWOOD "THE GOOD,
THE BAD &
THE UGLY"

CO-STARRING **LEE VAN CLEEF** ALDO GIUFFRÈ MARIO BREGA
also starring **ELI WALLACH** in the role of Tuco

Screenplay by AGE SCARPELLI, LUCIANO VINCENZONI and SERGIO LEONE
Directed by **SERGIO LEONE**
Music by ENnio MORRICONE
Produced by ALBERTO GRIMALDI for P. E. A. - Produzioni Europee Associate, Rome

TECHNISCOPE® TECHNICALOR® Suggested for Mature Audiences

Italy 1966

Director Sergio Leone

Written by Age Scarpelli, Luciano

Vincenzoni, Sergio Leone

With Clint Eastwood, Eli Wallach,

Lee Van Cleef, Aldo Giuffrè,

Roda Rossimo, Livio Lorenzon

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly has an Italian director, a huge plot with many characters and many sub-plots; it spans an entire continent; it has lavish sets, authentic period costumes and a highly regarded musical score. If it had been set in Europe and made by Bernardo Bertolucci, it might have won 12 Oscars, but it's a western, it was made by Sergio Leone and it didn't.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly is the third part of a trilogy which began in 1964 with *A Fistful of Dollars* and was followed by *For a Few Dollars More* in 1965). *A Fistful of Dollars* was Leone's first western, one of the first spaghetti westerns of them all and all the Italians involved in the production were so anxious to make it a success that they adopted American pseudonyms (Leone's was 'Bob Robertson').

They also wanted to have an American actor in the principal role. Leone's first choice, James Coburn, turned him down. He then turned to an American actor resident in Rome, Richard Harrison, and asked him to play the part, but Harrison didn't want to be in a western made by Italians and he said no. Leone asked him if he had any other ideas, and Harrison said, 'Yeah, I know a guy in the States, he's out of work, he might do it for you.' Leone said, 'What's he been in? Any films?' And Harrison said, 'No, he's never been in a film, but he did play Rowdy Yates in *Rawhide*'. The actor's name was Clint Eastwood and the rest is history.

GANG



Keep it in the family - THE GRISSOM GANG

The film stars Kim Darby, who was John Wayne's teenage co-star in *True Grit* and Tony Musante, who was in an extremely good 1969 cult movie directed by Dario Argento, *The Bird with Crystal Plumage*.

Aldrich's black-and-white films generally look great. His colour films, such as *The Grissom Gang*, are for some reason always too brightly lit, like television comedies.

THE HIRED HAND

US 1971

Director Peter Fonda

Written by Alan Sharp

With Peter Fonda, Warren Oates,
Verna Bloom, Robert Pratt,
Severn Darden, Ted Markland

In 1968, Dennis Hopper, Peter Fonda, Jack Nicholson, Bob Rafelson and Henry Jaglom made *Easy Rider*, the most successful cult film of all time. It was such a success that it probably isn't a cult film at all, but a mainstream movie. It made a lot of money, and as you know, money signifies quality. Money also conveys power. As a result of making such a successful film, all five guys were given more money to direct more films. Hopper went off to Peru and made *The Last Movie*; Nicholson directed *Drive, He Said*; Henry Jaglom made *A Safe Place*; Bob Rafelson made *Five Easy Pieces* (see 6); and Peter Fonda made a western called *The Hired Hand*.

Fonda's movie is not a great film. It's one of those acid westerns where the camerawork is all bleary and there are long transitions and the people don't say much. It's not as good as *The Last Movie*; it doesn't have Hopper's madness or breadth of vision. But what's really good about it is that it has a big performance by Warren Oates in the role of Fonda's sidekick, Harris. Warren Oates was a wonderful actor. He was in *Cockfighter*, a film which, because of its accurate depiction of its subject matter, can't be shown in Britain; he was in *Drum*, *Kid Blue*, *The Shooting*, *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*, *Dillinger* and *The Wild Bunch*, among others. If you talk to a really good American actor who's working today — someone like Dennis Hopper, Harry Dean Stanton, Ed Harris — and you ask who they think is the best American actor, living or dead, it is quite likely that they're not going to say Marlon Brando. They'll tell you it's Warren Oates.



Western meets Acid House—THE HIRED HAND

THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING

US 1957

Director Jack Arnold

Written by Richard Matheson

With Grant Williams, Randy Stuart,
April Kent, Paul Langton,
Raymond Bailey, Wilam Schaller

The Incredible Shrinking Man is a science fiction film made in the United States in 1957. Its director Jack Arnold made a series of science-fiction movies in the 1950s, including *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* and *Tarantula*.

All the science-fiction films of that era seem to deal in one way or another with the atom bomb. In *Them!*, nuclear testing in the desert creates a race of giant carnivorous ants; in *This Island Earth*, an alien planet has been destroyed by years of nuclear war; and in *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, our hero, Scott Carey, passes through a radioactive mist and incredibly... he starts to shrink.

All of this sounds pretty funny, and it is quite funny. However, it's worth pondering that, as the Americans embarked on the Korean war, taking us with it, and as the United States, the Soviet Union, France and Britain began amassing huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons, and as Eisenhower warned about the buildup of a 'military-industrial complex', the only films that addressed the issue were a handful of baroque science-fiction movies — most of them directed by Jack Arnold.

THE MOST
INCREDIBLE

STORY-
EVER
!



Hour
by hour
he gets
smaller -
and smaller !

Moment by
moment the
terror mounts

THE HONEYMOON KILLERS

US 1969

Director: Leonard Kastle

Written by: Leonard Kastle

With: Shirley Stoler, Tony Lo Bianco,
Mary Jane Higby, Doris Roberts,
Kip McArdle, Marilyn Chris

The Honeymoon Killers is a genuine classic cult film. It is a rarely seen docu-drama about two 'lonelyhearts murderers' – Nurse Martha Beck and Ray Hernandez – who together killed several of Ray's wives and girlfriends in the 1940s. At one point in the film, we are told the year is 1951, but there is no attempt at period verisimilitude: working on a tiny budget, the filmmakers used cars from the late 1960s, and locations that always look the same whether we're supposed to be in Alabama or New York.

The film was shot in black and white by Oliver Wood. It bears a striking visual resemblance to *Night of the Living Dead*, the other cult masterpiece made in Pittsburgh at around the same time.

My guess is that *The Honeymoon Killers* was shot in chronological sequence (that is, they shot the first scenes first and the last scenes at the end).



Unholy alliance – THE HONEYMOON KILLERS

because, while the beginning is a little ropey, the film becomes increasingly assured as it proceeds. By the second half, Leonard Kastle, whose first film this was, is making like Kurosawa – shooting whole scenes in single takes – and sometimes closing in on someone's eyes and holding the camera there while the most hideous things happen off screen.

The actors, too, improve as they progress. Shirley Stoler is awe-inspiring as the killer nurse, and Tony Lo Bianco is very credible as the Spanish bachelor Ray. The film never forgives them or romanticises them, yet they achieve a sort of pathos – even glory – by the end.

The whole thing is handled with considerable *savoir faire*. The music, which cuts off abruptly from time to time, was specially composed by Gustav Mahler.

KILLERS

You really should watch out for these Jack Arnold films. They were very cheaply made, funny, visionary and intelligent. They have good scripts as well. *The Incredible Shrinking Man* was written by Richard Matheson who wrote a lot of first-rate fantasy and SF, including the novel on which *The Omega Man* is based.

MAN



Small but beautifully formed – THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS

US 1956

Director: Don Siegel

Written by: Daniel Mainwaring

With: Kevin McCarthy, Dana Wynter,
Larry Gates, King Donovan,
Carolyn Jones, Jean Willes

This is a great rarity, a film whose remake – in 1978, directed by Phil Kaufman and starring Donald Sutherland – is as good as the original. Don Siegel's 1956 version is officially classed as a science-fiction film, but it really exists on the borderline between science fiction and *film noir*; rather like another famous cult movie, *Kiss Me Deadly* its theme – the substitution of red-blooded Americans by mindless, alien clones – has been described as a metaphor for the witch hunts of the McCarthy era and for the soulless nature of modern American life and, more recently, as an exercise in red-baiting, anti-Communism.

Apparently, the film's ending is not the one the director originally intended, but like many film-makers, Don Siegel had to confront a studio which had been taken over by mindless, alien clones. To satisfy them, he shot a prologue and an epilogue that both take place in a hospital and are designed to sweeten the pill and persuade you that things aren't as bad as the rest of the film tells you they are.

Siegel probably directed more cult movies than any other single director, including *Riot in Cell Block 11*, *The Killers* with Lee Marvin, *Dirty Harry*, *Madigan* and a wonderful Eastwood film called *The Beguiled* that's set in the American Civil War. The director has said that *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is the best film he ever made.



Gardeners question time? – INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS

JOHNNY GUITAR

US 1954

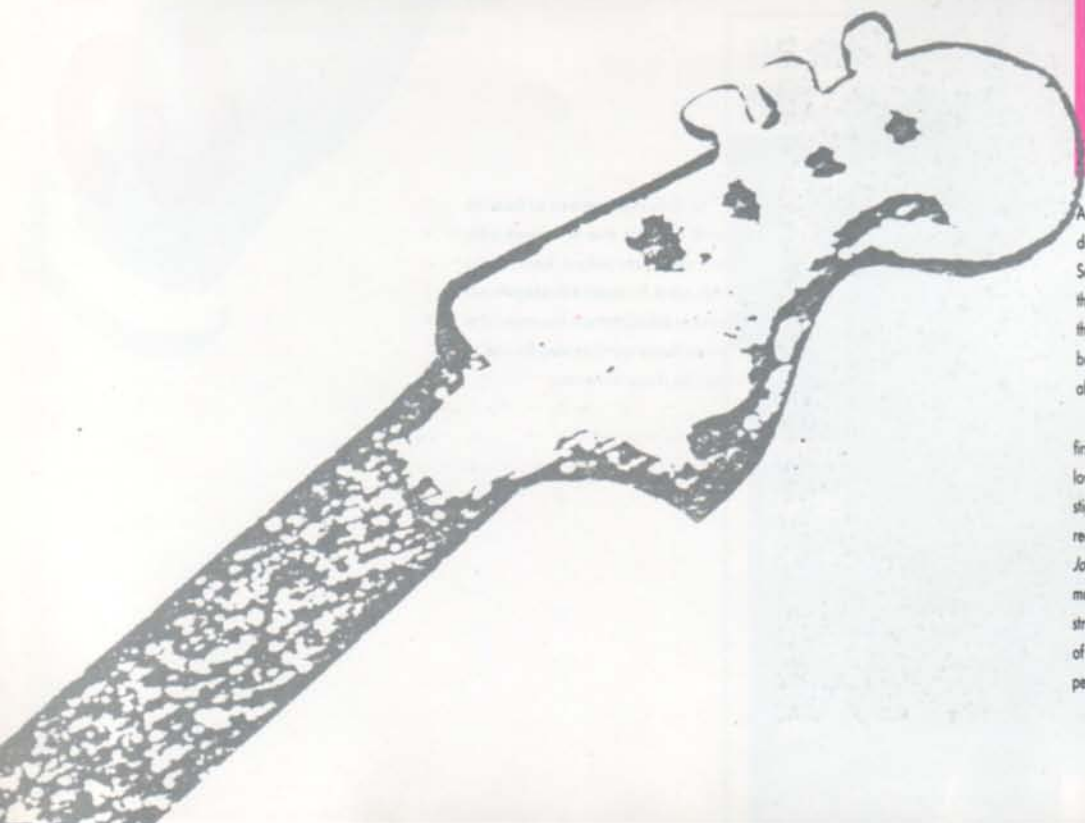
Director: Nicholas Ray

Written by: Philip Yordan

With: Joan Crawford, Sterling Hayden,
Mercedes McCambridge,
Scott Brady, Ward Bond,
Ben Cooper, Ernest Borgnine

A western, *Johnny Guitar* was produced and directed by Nicholas Ray. Nicholas Ray and Samuel Fuller are considered to be the kings of the cult directors. In his film *The American Friend*, the German director Wim Wenders used them both as actors; he also made a documentary about Ray called *Lightning over Water*.

Johnny Guitar wasn't very popular when it first came out, but in the years that have followed, it's acquired enormous status and prestige. I'm not sure exactly why. While I can see the reasons for liking, say, *One-Eyed Jacks* (see 12), *Johnny Guitar* leaves me a little cold. It seems more of a camp film than a cult one. It has very strong female characters who act like men. A lot of time and effort was spent on costumes – perhaps more than on some of the actors.



Britain 1977

Director Terry Gilliam

Written by Charles Alverson, Terry Gilliam

With: Michael Palin, Max Wall,

John Le Mesurier, Harry H.

Corbett, Deborah Fallender,

Rodney Bewes

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
and the mome raths outrabe.*

*'Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!*

*He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought –
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.*

*And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!*

*One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.*

JABBERWOCKY



"O frabjous day!" – JABBERWOCKY

'Twas brillig and

*And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!*

He chartered in his joy.

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outrabe.*

Lewis Carroll



I don't know much about Sigmund Freud, but apparently, according to certain critics, the film contains a hoard of Freudian symbols, including stairwells, pistols, mine shafts – the kinds of things that are in every western, in fact. It makes you wonder how many other films the critics have seen. *Johnny Guitar* does have great actors, though – Sterling Hayden, Joan Crawford, Mercedes McCambridge, Ernest Borgnine. But altogether it's not an entirely successful film – a bit like Christmas in July.

THE LAST PICTURE SHOW

US 1971

Director: Peter Bogdanovich
Written by: Larry McMurtry,
Peter Bogdanovich
With: Timothy Bottoms, Jeff Bridges,
Cybill Shepherd, Ben Johnson,
Cloris Leachman, Ellen Burstyn

The Last Picture Show was made in 1971, and when it came out, its principal claim to fame was that it was the return of Hollywood to the black-and-white movie. Hollywood hadn't made any black and white films since the early 1960s, supposedly because television sales demanded that all films be made in colour. *The Last Picture Show* details the decline of a small Texas cow town, or, if you like, the decline of the American dream (whatever that is), symbolised by the closing of the last cinema in town. It was produced by Bert Schneider; it was photographed by Robert Surtees, and the director's name was Peter Bogdanovich.

Bogdanovich was principally known at that time as an academic. For instance, he had produced a very good biography of John Ford, and, in fact, there are many references in *The Last Picture Show* to Ford's work: the black and white, the static camera and the use of Ben Johnson, a very good actor who was a member of John Ford's stock company.

Sadly, the return to black and white did not occur, and the only American directors working today who seem to make films in black and white on a regular basis are Woody Allen, Jim Jarmusch and Spike Lee. But it does seem strange that since rock videos and commercials are made in black and white and their job is to sell products (which they must do successfully or they wouldn't be made), why aren't many more films made in black and white now, too? I think it has more to do with the conservative nature of the Hollywood film industry than with the audience. Audiences can take it; Hollywood, it seems, cannot.



Black and white delight—THE LAST PICTURE SHOW

THE LOVED ONE

US 1965

Director: Tony Richardson
Written by: Terry Southern,
Christopher Isherwood
With: Robert Morse, Jonathan Winters,
Rod Steiger, Anjanette Comer,
John Gielgud, James Coburn,
Liberace, Robert Morley,
Lionel Stander

The Loved One is based on the novel by Evelyn Waugh. The script is by Christopher Isherwood and Terry Southern, both of whom had had horrible experiences in Hollywood from which they drew for the film's opening scenes. The transition from the movie business to the cemetery trade is seamless — after all, they're pretty much the same thing.

Richardson had already directed *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* and *Tom Jones*, and this was his first American film. It has an all star cast: James Coburn is a customs inspector; Liberace sells caskets, John Gielgud and Robert Morley are members of the loathsome Santa Monica British Colony.

It all sounds so good that naturally something has to be wrong with the package. Robert Morse, who plays the protagonist Dennis Barlow, isn't in the same league as Jonathan Winters, Rod Steiger, Lionel Stander and the like.



'Ferd
See
'We
Men
'A W
Fas
-NEW
ROB
To live and

THE LONG HAIR OF DEATH



Black and white fright—THE LONG HAIR OF DEATH

Italy 1964

Director Anthony Dawson

Written by Robert Bohr

With Barbara Steele, Giorgio Ardisson,
Halina Zalewska, Robert Rains,
Jean Rafferty, Laureen Nuyen

The Long Hair of Death is a spaghetti horror film about witchcraft, set in the Middle Ages. It's made in black and white, and, as is usually the case with black-and-white films, it makes you wonder why more films aren't made in black and white because they always look better than films in colour.

This film has certain similarities with *The Wicker Man* (see 17), in that various people get stuck in large wicker structures and set on fire. In addition to the wicker structures, there are tombs, sliding panels, poisonings, plagues, priests, old dukes, young dukes, lecherous people buried alive and people coming back from the dead, so there's something for everyone.

It stars Barbara Steele, a British actress who, upon her arrival in Italy at the beginning of the 1960s, appeared in a whole series of films exactly like *The Long Hair of Death*. An amazing-looking woman, with big eyes and incredible cheekbones, she's now a film producer, I believe.

This film was directed by Antonio Margheriti, who goes by the anglicised pseudonyms Anthony Dawson and Anthony Davies and also Anthony Daisies. He made a string of films like this one—horror films in which wronged people come back from the dead to take revenge on those who did them harm. Margheriti also made quite an interesting western with Klaus Kinski, which you might be able to find down at the video shop. It's called *Death in the Wind*, and, in it, Kinski plays a wronged person who comes back from the dead to take revenge on the people who did him harm.

death



The leading lady, Anjanette Comer, who plays mortuary beautician Miss Thanatogenos, is considerably better than her beau.

The other problem is the script. As long as it stays in the general vicinity of Waugh's novel, it's brilliant. However, Southern and Isherwood added an elaborate sub-plot involving a teenage rocket genius, and the second half is peppered with such characters as General Chuck Brinkman who all appear to have wandered in from *Dr Strangelove*. But *The Loved One* didn't need 'opening up' in this crass Hollyweird fashion, and, ironically, the film falls into the same trap that it parodies at the beginning.

THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH

Britain 1976

Director: Nicolas Roeg
Written by: Paul Mayersberg
With: David Bowie, Rip Torn,
Candy Clark, Buck Henry,
Bernie Casey, Jackson D. Kane

This British science-fiction movie was made in the United States in 1976. It stars David Bowie, Candy Clarke, Rip Torn and Buck Henry – all excellent. Bowie plays an alien trapped on earth, and I think it's his best acting work. *The Man Who Fell to Earth* is based on a fine novel Walter Tevis, who also wrote *The Hustler*.

The film was directed by Nicolas Roeg who is, I think, of all the British film directors at work today, probably the most interesting and the best. He's also the only film director who's had a rock 'n' roll song written in his honour (it's on Big Audio Dynamite's first album). Roeg is not one of those reclusive geniuses who only makes a great work once every seven years; he's productive and diverse. His films include *Don't Look Now*, *Walkabout*, *Performance*, *Insignificance*, *Eureka*, *Castaway* and *Track 29*.

He started out as a cinematographer and worked for Roger Corman – he shot *The Masque of the Red Death*. His most interesting aspect, however, is not the visual one, although visually his films are very good. It's the editorial: his films are structurally very complex and convoluted. Watching one is rather like watching six or seven televisions in a row, each of them transmitting a different story. This means that, on a first viewing, Roeg's films are hard to follow but, if you persist, you will be rewarded. Rather like a fine wine, his films improve with age.



NIGHT OF THE COMET

US 1984

Director: Thom Eberhardt
Written by: Thom Eberhardt
With: Robert Beltran, Catherine Mary
Stewart, Kelli Maroney,
Sharon Farrell, Mary Woronov,
Geoffrey Lewis

Night of the Comet is a science-fiction opus made in Los Angeles in 1984. Its premise is very similar to that of *The Day of the Triffids*, a 1962 British science-fiction movie based on the book by John Wyndham.

Night of the Comet – whose working title was 'Teenage Comet Zombies' is a mixture of the wide-eyed 1950s type of science-fiction movie and the post-apocalyptic 'punk' science-fiction style. It has a lot of time-lapse photography – whereby the camera runs slowly, shooting only two or three frames every second, and, as a result, cloud formations or what have you go by extremely fast. In addition, a lot of coloured filters were put on the camera lens, so that an ordinary street or sky or whatever is made to look 'weird'. What the film doesn't have is a sense of driving, manic purpose. Compare it to *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (see 8) or *The Thing from Another World* (see 15). Both were made in the 1950s and don't have the same failed attempts at humour and are better as a result.



Wide-eyed and punky – NIGHT OF THE COMET

THE MAN WITH X-RAY EYES

US 1963

Director: Roger Corman

Written by: Robert Dillon, Ray Russell

With: Ray Milland, Diana Van der Vlis,
Harold J. Stone, John Hoyt,
Don Rickles, John Dierkes

X

Roger Corman, the director of *The Man with X-ray Eyes* (also known as *X*), is the man responsible for more cult films than any other human being, living or dead. He began as a director of exploitation movies such as *Swamp Women*, *The Viking Women and the Sea Serpent*, and, to some extent, the original *Little Shop of Horrors*. In the early 1960s, he made a fantastic series of baroque horror films based on stories by Edgar Allan Poe – such as *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *The Pit and the Pendulum*. He also made the acid exposé *The Trip*, and produced countless other movies. In recent years, he has not been active as a director, although he and his wife Julie Corman produce several features annually.

While always trying to be commercial, Corman ensured that his films retained the sort of humanitarian politics which are pretty rare in exploitation movies. *The Man with X-ray Eyes* is the story of a brilliant genius driven to murder and destruction by challenging the gods. Dr Xavier, alias 'X', is played by Ray Milland who, the previous year, had directed his own cult movie – *Panic in the Year Zero* – about a nuclear war.

The Man with X-ray Eyes, made for AIP, one of the all-time greatest exploitation houses, is a totally mad film with good ideas and cheesy special effects. However, it does have a splendidly surreal opening shot – 30 seconds of something you don't want to see...



Trouble with contact lenses – THE MAN WITH X-RAY EYES

Night of the Comet does feature one essential cult element in the presence of Mary Woronov, the very tall actress who starred in many Paul Bartel films. It also has Dick Rude (from *Repo Man*) and Chris Pederson (from *Suburbia*) as mutant supermarket bag boys. As so often in this kind of film, you sort of wish the villains were the heroes...





ONE-EYED JACKS

US 1961

Director: Marlon Brando
 Written by: Guy Trosper, Calder Willingham
 With: Marlon Brando, Karl Malden,
 Fina Pellicci, Katy Jurado,
 Ben Johnson, Slim Pickens

One-Eyed Jacks began life as a modest western based on a book by Charles Neider called *The Authentic Death of Hendry Jones*. The first treatment was written by a television director called Sam Peckinpah, who hoped to make it his first feature film. Then Marlon Brando became involved and immediately Peckinpah was out. Brando chose as the director an up-and-coming guy by the name of Stanley Kubrick.

Soon Kubrick left the picture, unable to work creatively with Brando, so when shooting began, Brando was at the directorial helm. The film took a long time to shoot – it is said that Brando spent days and days waiting for the perfect wave to break on the shore, and also that, whenever he and Karl Malden, who were both Method actors from New York, needed to be drunk for a sequence, they would actually get drunk.

When the film was finally completed, Brando's cut was five hours long. He showed it to the studio who said, "You've got to cut it down." Brando cut the film in half, but, in so doing, he became dispirited and did not direct again. This is a great pity because *One-Eyed Jacks* is a wonderful movie – just like *The Night of the Hunter*, another film directed by an actor, Charles Laughton, and his only film.

Interestingly, Brando didn't know how to end the film. There were two endings: in one of them, his character died; in the other, his adversary did. So when they were ready to shoot that sequence, Brando called all the cast, crew and extras together on the set, told them both alternatives, and they took a vote. Democracy in action.



Democracy in action – ONE EYED JACKS

THE PARALLAX

US 1974

Director: Alan J. Pakula
 Written by: David Giler,
 Lorenzo Semple Jr.
 With: Warren Beatty, Paula Prentiss,
 William Daniels, Walter McGinn,
 Hume Cronyn, Kelly Thordsen

In the 1960s, the United States went through two apocalypses from which it did not emerge as the same country. One was the Vietnam war; the other was the political assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King. In the last decade, Hollywood finally started to deal with the Vietnam war, and lately there's been a plethora of films about it. But although there have been revelations – for example, the Los Angeles Police Department was recently forced in a law suit to open its files on the Robert Kennedy assassination, and it turned out that 2,500 official police photographs and all the physical evidence from the assassination had disappeared – no such attention has been paid to the events that occurred in Dallas, Texas, Los Angeles and Memphis, Tennessee.

view



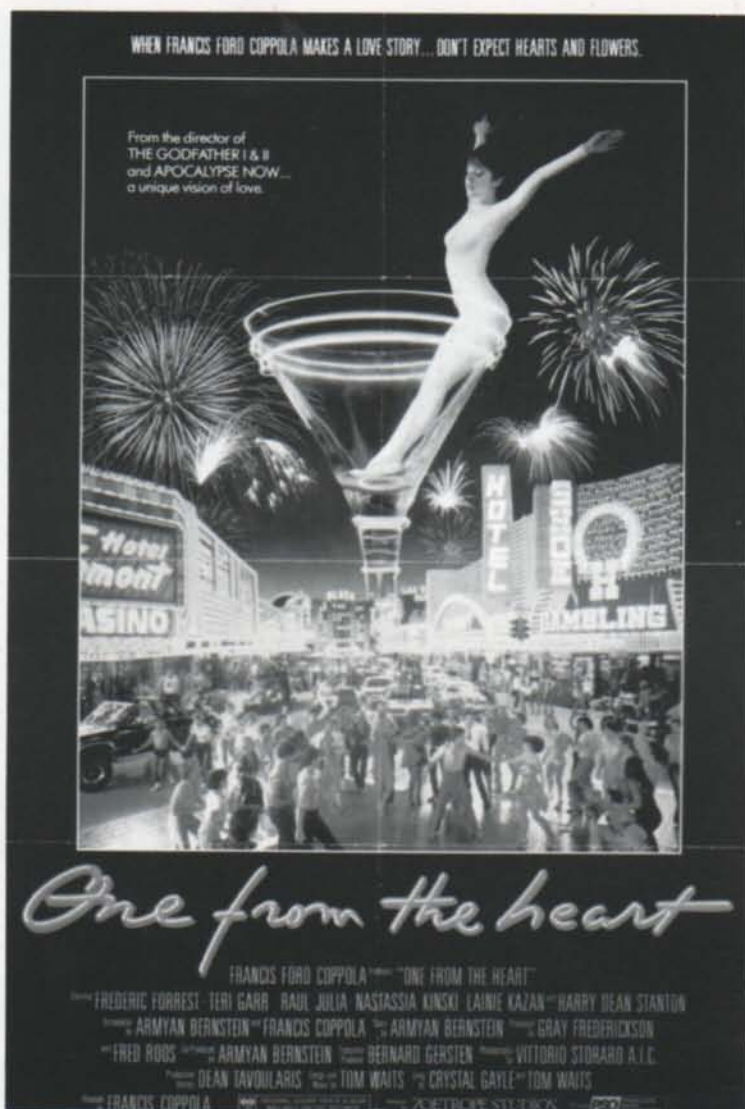
Where were you the

ONE FROM THE HEART

US 1982

Director Francis Coppola
Written by Armyan Bernstein,
Francis Coppola

With: Frederic Forrest, Teri Garr,
Raul Julia, Nastassja Kinski,
Lainie Kazan, Harry Dean Stanton



One from the Heart was the first film Coppola made after *Apocalypse Now*. I think that this was, in a sense, his attempt to come down after creating that enormous epic, which took a lot of energy and several years of production – making instead a small, intimate story about two people and what happens when you try to cheat on your boyfriend or girlfriend.

It is set in Las Vegas, but it was all filmed on the sound stages of Coppola's Zoetrope Studios in Hollywood. Zoetrope was a noble attempt to recreate an old-style studio system for the benefit of creative people: in the two years that Coppola owned Zoetrope, before he had to let it go for lack of money, Gene Kelly, Wim Wenders and Jean-Luc Goddard all worked there. Zoetrope may have been a noble endeavour, but it was also the reason why *One from the Heart* doesn't entirely work. There are two things at war in the film. One is the very simple romantic story, and the other is the grandiose element: the \$25 million budget, the elaborate sets, the big special-effect dance numbers and the awful songs.

It's not that the songs by Tom Waits and Crystal Gayle are bad in themselves; it's only that when you see a man walking upstairs, tripping on an item of a woman's clothing, picking it up, looking at it, frowning and carrying on walking, you don't need to hear a voice on the soundtrack singing: 'I'm sick and tired of picking up after you.' It's a sort of overkill.

Coppola had to wait a little while longer before he could make a small, cheap film that was really satisfying – that was *Rumblefish* (see 13). But *One from the Heart* is interesting. All Coppola's films are interesting. The man can't make a totally useless movie.

VIEW



In the last 25 years or so, the years that have elapsed since the murder of John F. Kennedy, Hollywood has made few films on the subject: they include the docu-drama *Executive Action*, *Winter Kills* and *The Parallax View*, made 16 years ago. Something happened in Dallas in 1963. We don't know what it was, and nor do the people who made this film. They're only guessing. That's all we can do. But something happened, and it changed the world, and we're living with those changes now.

THE PHENIX CITY STORY

US 1955

Director: Phil Karlson

Written by: Crane Wilbur, Dan Mainwaring

With: John McIntire, Richard Kiley, Kathryn Grant, Edward Andrews, Lenka Peterson, Biff McGuire

The Phenix City Story was directed in 1955 by Phil Karlson, who also directed the 1962 Elvis Presley remake of *Kid Galahad* as well as *From Hell to Eternity* and the rat movie *Ben*. It's an example of that much-loved cult genre, the expose film. Other examples are *Reefer Madness*, *I Was a Communist for the FBI* and *Midnight Express*.

The Phenix City Story also features an early example of the fine art of 'product placement', which is the reason most films are made nowadays. Product placement is a system whereby the producers of a film receive certain items for free, or perhaps even money, in return for prominently displaying these items in their film. This began with beer and airlines, and in this film, we see an airliner and a set of steps bearing the logo of a certain carrier.



Shock Horror Exposé! — THE PHENIX CITY STORY

Anyway, *The Phenix City Story* is a backwoods morality play about a gang of slot machine vendors and card sharps operating in Alabama in the years following the Second World War. You will be pleased to hear that these bad men are defeated by a combination of guts and democracy, plus the sacrifice of a few subsidiary characters. But at the end of the film, a nagging doubt remains: where are all the black people in the scenes where democracy goes into action and the die is cast? Can it really be that, in the southern United States in 1955, black people weren't allowed to vote? *The Phenix City Story* doesn't tell us. Instead, it concentrates on the Real Problem, which — then, as no doubt now — was slot machines.

Q — THE WINGED SERPENT

US 1982

Director: Larry Cohen

Written by: Larry Cohen

With: Michael Moriarty, Candy Clark, David Carradine, Richard Roundtree, James Dixon, Malachy McCourt, Bruce Carradine

Q is one of those films with a confusing plethora of names. In the United States, it was first known as *The Winged Serpent*. Later it was retitled simply *Q* (short for Quetzalcoatl, the Aztec god who was half reptile, half bird). In Britain, it is known, more formally, as *Q — The Winged Serpent*.

The director Larry Cohen is a famed writer/director/producer of exploitation films, among them *Demon*, *It's Alive!* and *The Private Files of J. Edgar Hoover*. *Q* was his most ambitious film, a combination of a slasher movie and *King Kong*. In fact, Cohen goes one better and sets his monster's roost, not on the Empire State Building, but in the attic of the Chrysler Building.

Cohen is a true guerrilla film-maker. He doesn't bother with permits or permissions or anything like that. Finish the first draft, gather up whatever character actors are to hand and git out there and shoot. Several times, the production of *Q* was halted by police who thought that the hail of gunfire coming from the upper floors of Manhattan skyscrapers was genuine.



The film has — in addition to the usual red-faced bewigged bit-players — Michael Moriarty, who was the star of *Dog Soldiers*, Candy Clark, from *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (see 11), Richard Roundtree, who, of course, was 'Shaft', and a brace of Carradines.

Cohen has very bad taste, but he knows how to keep a story moving. Unlike John Sayles, who directed *Alligator* (see 1), he isn't interested in ringing any changes on a genre: he just tells the story and that's it. He also has a nice eye for detail and a perverse sense of humour.

RAZORBACK

Australia 1984

Director Russell Mulcahy

Written by Everett de Roche

With Gregory Harrison, Arkie Whiteley

Bill Kerr, Chris Haywood,

David Argue, Judy Morris



Pigs in the Outback - RAZORBACK

Before he tackled *Razorback*, Russell Mulcahy had been a director of rock videos. In the early 1980s, he went to the jungles of Sri Lanka with a gang of pudgy white boys called 'Duran Duran' and made three very exotic rock videos, back to back, for £20,000. They made Duran Duran very famous and very rich. Since then, Mulcahy has made two films. *Razorback* was his first.

It is an example of the rock video school of film-making: a lot of coloured lights, wide-angle lenses, cloud filters, revolving ceiling fans, and a great many tracking and dolly and crane shots that don't really mean anything but look good and keep the film rolling along.

This is the story of weird goings-on in and around the town of Gamulla in the Australian outback. It's a catalogue of hideousness: horrible, kangaroo-murdering Australians; slaughter houses; Barry Manilow posters; journalists; songs by Elton John; misogynistic, drunk and nasty Australian men; and a giant, metal-eating pig. It's a darker view of Australia and Australian life than the Australian cinema normally gives us these days. But it's an interesting film and has many good aspects, including a wonderful, surrealistic dream sequence in the middle. Hallucination photography in this film is credited to one Mr Steve Dobson.

US 1983

Director Francis Coppola

Written by S. E. Hinton, Francis Coppola

With Matt Dillon, Mickey Rourke,

Diane Lane, Dennis Hopper,

Diana Scarwid, Vincent Spano

RUMBLEFISH

While directing *One from the Heart* (see 12), Francis Coppola received a letter from a class of schoolchildren in the American Midwest. The children said, since he was such a good director (they had all enjoyed *Apocalypse Now*), would he please consider tackling their favourite literary work, a book called *The Outsiders*, by the children's author S. E. Hinton. Coppola agreed.

While shooting *The Outsiders*, Coppola decided to make a second film back-to-back with it—a smaller, more personal work. The result was called *Rumblefish*, and it, too, is based on a book by S. E. Hinton.

The Outsiders fell down in the end because it was too big. *Rumblefish* works much better. Although it's a much darker film, it's more in synch with all that schoolboy-schoolgirl-rumble-anxiety stuff which makes Hinton's novels so popular with Midwest schoolkids. Coppola called it 'Camus for kids' and it's full of clocks without hands, long shadows, speeded-up cloud formations, references to Greek literature and all manner of portentousness and pretention.



Camus for kids - RUMBLEFISH

It's really good, too. The photography is by Stephen Burum. The production designer is Dean Tavoularis, who provides a weird mixture of the 1950s and the 1980s and beyond. The sound design is by Richard Beggs, who has created the sound for all of Francis's recent films; the score is by Stewart Copeland and Stan Ridgeway.

It's also in black and white (with colour inserts). This may be why the studio sabotaged it. Or it might have been Dillon's out-of-body experience that tipped them off. *Rumblefish* played at two cinemas in the United States and then went straight to video, suffering an even worse fate than *Brazil* (see 3). (It was the same arseholes that did it, by the way.)

STARDUST MEMORIES

US 1980

Director: Woody Allen

Written by: Woody Allen

With: Woody Allen, Charlotte Rampling, Jessica Harper, Marie-Christine Barrault, Tony Roberts, Helen Hanft

Woody Allen is a former stand-up comedian and resident of New York, who directed and starred in *Bananas*, *Love and Death* and the extremely popular *Annie Hall*. Allen is in the enviable position of being able to make films on whatever subject he desires, in colour or in black and white. Most film directors, sadly, trudge forlornly from cop movie to cop movie, from *Alien* to *Rambo*?

But is Mr Allen happy? No! And the reason is that, while he wants to be appreciated and remembered for his serious films, his *Interiors* and *September*, all the public want to see from him are comedies. It's as if he were the central character in Preston Sturges's *Sullivan's Travels*: a film director who yearns to make a serious statement while the studio presses him to make another funny one...

So Mr Allen trudges sadly from film festival to retrospective, always bugged by pretty girls and people who want him to be different from the way he is, or at least the way he thinks he is,



Woody's worries - STARDUST MEMORIES

artistically and lifestyle-wise. Which is what *Stardust Memories* is all about. In it, Allen plays Sandy Bates, an auteur film director beset by the same dilemma as Sturges's Sullivan and Allen himself.

So what if the film seems slight or self-indulgent? This man is a great film-maker, maybe the best American director alive and working. Look at the faces in this film: nobody else makes films with such dishevelled and weird-looking people. Even better, *Stardust Memories* is 98 per cent funny. And the other 2 per cent consists of two minutes of Charlotte Rampling that is serious and amazing.

SUNSET BOULEVARD

US 1950

Director: Billy Wilder

Written by: Billy Wilder, Charles Brackett, D. M. Marshman Jr

With: William Holden, Gloria Swanson, Eric von Stroheim, Nancy Olson, Cecil B. de Mille, Hedda Hopper, Buster Keaton

Sunset Boulevard is perhaps the most famous of all cult movies and certainly the best film about Hollywood ever made. The genius behind this malicious entertainment is Billy Wilder, an Austrian emigré whose real name was Samuel Wilder (his mother nicknamed him 'Billy' after Buffalo Bill). He came to Hollywood in 1934 to write a script called 'Pam Pam', but languished unnoticed until 1938 when he began a profitable partnership with Charles Brackett (one of the writers of this film), their first big hit being *Ninotchka* in 1939.

Wilder made films, most of them both critical and commercial successes, for the next 40 years or so. His cynical and unerring eye for human behaviour has made for some of the funniest and most acute Hollywood movies - *Ace in the Hole* (see 1), *The Lost Weekend*, *Some Like It Hot* and *Double Indemnity* to name but a few.



"I am big - it was the pictures that got small" - SUNSET BOULEVARD

In this one, Gloria Swanson plays a fading silent-movie star who becomes entwined with young screenwriter William Holden. Among the supporting players (often cast as themselves) are some of the most famous names in the history of Tinseltown, including gossip columnist Hedda Hopper, Buster Keaton and the legendary silent director, Eric von Stroheim in the role of Swanson's butler.

In 1928, Von Stroheim had been the director of *Queen Kelly* - a big-budget picture financed by and starring Gloria Swanson. She didn't care for his extravagance and fired him halfway through production. It was to be his last film as director, and for the next 30 years he mostly earned a living as an actor. Just one of the strange 'coincidences' in *Sunset Boulevard*.

SUNSET

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

US 1957

Director: Alexander Mackendrick
Written by: Clifford Odets, Ernest Lehman
With: Burt Lancaster, Tony Curtis,
 Susan Harrison, Martin Milner,
 Sam Levene, Barbara Nichols

Sweet Smell of Success is the story of a sleazy press agent called Sidney Falco (Tony Curtis), and his life's work currying favour with the sinister and powerful newspaper columnist J. J. Hunsecker (Burt Lancaster). Both Curtis and Lancaster are great. Lancaster's character seems to be modelled on the powerful media personality Walter Winchell; he's a friend of senators and big-time mafiosi; Curtis is always snapping at his heels, barking for scraps. It's a fantastic film, but almost unknown in the United States.

It was directed by Alexander Mackendrick who was born in Boston, Massachusetts but educated in Scotland. The director of some of the finest Ealing comedies, including *Whisky Galore* and *The Ladykillers*; this was his first American film, an incredibly funny indictment of the media and advertising and human relationships and just about everything else. Maybe it was Mackendrick's ex-patriot background that helped him cut through all the bullshit and make a great American film. Other 'foreign directors'



"Match me Sidney"—SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

who spring to mind are John Schlesinger with *Midnight Cowboy* and Milos Forman with *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Or, flowing the other way, Stanley Kubrick came to Britain and made *Clockwork Orange*, a pretty good movie about us.

Sweet Smell of Success was written by Ernest Lehman and Clifford Odets who did a similar hatchet job on Hollywood with *The Big Knife*. Success was photographed by James Wong Howe, one of the great Hollywood cameramen.

We need heroes and villains, and this film has two of the latter. In the words of Sidney Falco: never forget, 'it's in a man's nature to get out there and hustle and get the things he wants'.

THE TERMINATOR

US 1984

Director: James Cameron
Written by: James Cameron,
 Gale Anne Hurd
With: Arnold Schwarzenegger,
 Michael Biehn, Linda Hamilton,
 Paul Winfield, Lance Henriksen,
 Rick Rossovich

The Terminator is a 1980s LA. science-fiction film. It has all the necessary elements of the sub-genre: punks, policemen, chases down alleys, tracking shots through the cop shop, an obsession with guns. What raises it above the level of the ordinary is the script and the Bad Man, who gets star billing.

The script is credited to James Cameron and Gale Ann Hurd, respectively director and producer. This is a little misleading, since the real source of the story is an old episode of *The Outer Limits* called 'Soldier', the story of an assassin sent back in time to kill someone and change the future. This was written by Harlan Ellison.

The Terminator's greatest asset is, of course, Arnold Schwarzenegger. This was the first of a series of big-budget science-fiction action films that he starred in, which include *Predator*, *The Running Man* and, most recently, the \$70 million *Total Recall*. What can you say about Schwarzenegger? Well, he's Austrian, he has enormous



muscles, he obviously has a sense of humour and he's now very rich. He's also a Republican and married to the daughter of one of America's most influential political dynasties. In *Total Recall*, he plays a macho man called Quade.

Unfortunately, Arnold isn't a native-born American and so he can never be President, but he's still doing what he can. So watch Arnold doing his bit for Truth, Justice and the Almighty Box Office.

The Terminator cost about \$6 million to make. *Terminator 2*, now in production, is budgeted at \$60 million, more than half of which will go to pay the actors and director.

THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD

thing

US 1951

Director: Christian Nyby

Written by: Charles Lederer

With: Margaret Sheridan, Kenneth Tobey, Robert Cornthwaite, Douglas Spencer, James Arness, Dewey Martin

The Thing from Another World is a story of strange events at the North Pole, remade by John Carpenter in 1982 as *The Thing* (the US title of the 1951 original). In typical 1950s science-fiction style, old professors, sexy secretaries and the US military battle a 'thing from another world'.

The film has a long, slow buildup with a lot of dialogue; the script is based on the short story 'Who Goes There?' by John Campbell, who was editor of *Analog*, the science-fiction magazine. The fact that the dialogue often overlaps has led various authorities to believe that the film was, in fact, directed by Howard Hawks, its nominal producer. Hawks was famous for his fast, overlapping dialogue, and he had apparently employed Nyby as an assistant director on previous films. There was a similar relationship to that of the producer Sergio Leone and director Tonino Valerii on *My Name Is Nobody*.

In the original *Thing*, unlike the remake, the monster is rarely seen. Most of its mayhem takes place off screen, like the battles in the Shakespearean tragedies. The monster's name, like that of the 'Man with X-ray Eyes' (see 11), is 'X'.

Flying saucer enthusiasts should note that the story, which includes a crashed UFO and a giant plant that drinks blood, is not dissimilar to the notorious 'Roswell incident' of 1946, in which a US Air Force base issued a press release that a flying disc had crashed in southern New Mexico with the remains of four dead aliens on board...

Watch the skies!



Coming out of the ice - THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD

TRANCERS

US 1984

Director: Charles Band

Written by: Danny Bilson, Paul de Meo

With: Tim Thomerson, Helen Hunt, Michael Stefani, Art Le Fleur, Telma Hopkins, Richard Herd

Trancers is an example of the low-budget science fiction that came out of Los Angeles in the early 1980s. Some of it, such as *Night of the Comet* (see 11), was made by the new independent companies like Atlantic; some by the venerable Roger Corman at his studio in Venice California, a former lumber yard; and a lot of it, including *Trancers*, came from an independent outfit called Empire, run by Charles Band, the director of this film. Most of this stuff rips off of *Alien* or *Star Wars*; *Trancers* is a rip-off of *Blade Runner* with a substantial nod to *The Terminator* (see 14). In that sense, its taste is excellent - it has time-travelling cops and flying police cars - but its grasp is longer than its reach.



THX 1138

US 1970

Director: George Lucas
 Written by: George Lucas, Walter Murch
 With: Robert Duvall, Donald Pleasence,
 Don Pedro Colley, Maggie
 McOmie, Ian Wolfe, Sid Haig



Skinhead paradise – THX 1138

THX 1138 was the first film directed by George Lucas, the begetter of a film phenomenon called *Star Wars*. Lucas made *THX* when he was 25 years old, the age at which Orson Welles made *Citizen Kane*. The executive producer was Francis Ford Coppola – the American giant who created *The Godfather* and *Apocalypse Now* – and it was made for his production company Zoetrope.

The story goes that Lucas originally made *THX* at film school, and that the Great Man encountered Lucas slaving away there and said, "Pretty good movie, kid. Why don't you make it as a feature?" The story continues that Lucas couldn't think of a title for his film and finally settled on his car registration number. He shot it in San Francisco, partly in the uncompleted subway system.

Anyway, *'THX 1138'* is a man living in a skinhead paradise of the future. This world is underground, and its inhabitants are permanently stoned on drugs and muzak. Just in case they get out of line, there are plenty of robot cops to set them straight with cattle prods. One of the cops is played by Johnny Weissmuller Jr, son of the man who was Tarzan. *'THX'* himself is played by Robert Duvall, a very fine actor.

Although it has good things in it, I don't think *THX 1138* is really a great film. It's a little obscure and stand-offish.

Good science-fiction works because we can relate it to the world we live in; the world of *THX 1138* is so detached and alien that it doesn't really intersect with real life, whatever that is...



Everything in this film is much too clean – even the street people are freshly washed and laundered. Its greatest assets are its Father Christmas scene, which is fantastic, and its locations. It was all filmed in the industrial wasteland south of Los Angeles, which really does look like a cross between the 1920s and a post-apocalyptic landscape. Don't fail to note the sequence in the L.A. River, a huge concrete channel which divides the city in two and which has provided so many movies with locations.



TWO-LANE BLACKTOP

US 1971

Director Monte Hellman

Written by Rudolph Wurlitzer, Will Corry

With James Taylor, Warren Oates,

Laurie Bird, Dennis Wilson,

David Drake, Richard Ruth

Two-Lane Blacktop is, after *Easy Rider* the king of the road movies. It came out in 1971, around the same time as Francis Ford Coppola's *The Rain People*, *Five Easy Pieces* (see 6) and Richard Sarafian's *Vanishing Point*. All of these are equally pessimistic variations on the same theme – which is, according to Rudy Wurlitzer, the writer of this film, that 'you can't escape from whatever you're trying to escape from, and the lesson of the road is that there is no lesson of the road'.

Two-Lane Blacktop, based on a TV movie script by Will Corry, tells the story of two existential hot-rod racers, played by the singer James Taylor and Dennis Wilson, drummer of the Beach Boys. They became involved in an obsessive road race with a flash Harry character played by Warren Oates, all competing for possession of a pink slip – that is, a car registration or ownership certificate. The two hot-rodgers drive a souped-up old car, Oates has a brand new Pontiac GTO. The two mumble a lot and are really bad actors; Oates has the most amazing line of patter and incredible adventures. Also watch out for Harry Dean Stanton as the gay hitch-hiker.

The director, Monte Hellman, is a mysterious figure, who has made few films but has had a great deal of influence on his peers – Coppola, Peckinpah, the other road-movie directors, and especially Wim Wenders. Hellman and Oates did their best work in collaboration, particularly in *Cockfighter*, a film which unfortunately we can't see in Britain due to its subject matter. Oates was a great actor, one of the best of all American actors, and he lights up this film every time he appears.



Road runners – TWO-LANE BLACKTOP

WALK ON THE

US 1962

Director Edward Dmytryk

Written by John Fante, Edmund Morris

With Laurence Harvey, Capucine,

Jane Fonda, Barbara Stanwyck,

Anne Baxter, Richard Rust

The script for *Walk on the Wild Side* was written by John Fante, an American author of some cult renown, from a book by Nelson Algren (author of *The Man with the Golden Arm*). It is a total melodrama, about a naive farm boy in love with a sculptress who has become a prostitute. The farm boy is played by the English actor Laurence Harvey, who played upper-crust Americans in a number of films, most notably in *The Manchurian Candidate*. In *Walk on the Wild Side*, Harvey is supposedly from Texas, although his accent is more that of a southern gentleman...

One of the best things about the film is Jane Fonda, who's excellent in the role of Kitty Twist, giving a riveting performance as the bad girl who pops out of a drain pipe. Barbara Stanwyck is also pretty good as the lesbian brothel-keeper (this was a few years before *The Big Valley*). All the women in the film are very attractive, powerful and upwardly mobile. The men – even the villains – are just wimps.

walks

ULZANA'S RAID

US 1972

Director: Robert Aldrich
 Written by: Alan Sharp
 With: Burt Lancaster, Bruce Davison,
 Jorge Luke, Richard Jaeckel,
 Joaquin Martinez, Lloyd Bochner

In 1954, Burt Lancaster played an American Indian in a psychological western called *Apache*, directed by Robert Aldrich. Eighteen years later, Lancaster appeared in another western by Aldrich which also dealt with the Apaches: *Ulzana's Raid*. *Apache* had been made when the US cinema was re-evaluating its view of the American Indian, who in the bad old days of cowboy films had been generally portrayed as a villainous savage prone to the most hideous extremes of cruelty and violence. *Ulzana's Raid* was made at the height of the Vietnam war, and uses the American Indian for very different ends. As with *Soldier Blue* and *Chato's Land*, *Ulzana's Raid* depicts the west as a battleground between white people who basically had no business being there and savage Indians prone to the most hideous extremes of cruelty and violence. By going to war with those they believe are 'savages', the 'civilized' people in each film turn out to be exactly like them.



Live in hell and rent out Arizona—ULZANA'S RAID

Ulzana's Raid, made the year after *The Grissom Gang* (see 7), is a Robert Aldrich film and therefore has a superficially crude style which disguises considerable subtlety and skill. He is a great director of actors and knows the power of the empty frame.

Lancaster is great, as he always is in westerns. The script by British writer Alan Sharp is very good and not necessarily racist despite ascribing such violence to the Apaches, since these Indians of the southwest, unlike the Hopi or the Navajo, had a reputation for being pretty Thatcherite towards their 'guests'.

The film was shot in Nogales, Arizona. As someone said, 'If you have a choice 'twixt hell and Arizona, live in hell and rent out Arizona.'

WILD SIDE

...de of life you never expected to see on the screen!

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE^x
 a new kind of love-story starring
LAURENCE HARVEY
CAPUCINE
JANÉ FONDA
ANNE BAXTER
 and **BARBARA STANWYCK**
 as "JO"
 HEARST BRONCO BROTHERS PRESENTS CHARLES K. FELDMAN'S
 HEARST BRONCO BROTHERS PRESENTS "WALK ON THE WILD SIDE"
 Screenplay by JOHN FANTE & EDMUND MORRIS
 Produced by CHARLES K. FELDMAN Directed by EDWARD DMYTRYK
 A U.S. RELEASE

Walk on the Wild Side starts out very well. The New Orleans locations were later recalled in *Down by Law* (see 5)—particularly the opening sequence of the Jarmusch film—which also deals with New Orleans lowlife. *Walk* is about the United States of the 1930s, but it could just as easily be happening today; the hero is homeless; unemployment is widespread; drivers won't stop to pick up hitch-hikers; and the US Marines are setting sail for Panama.

The most famous element of the film, by the way, isn't the acting or the directing or any of that stuff. It's the title sequence, designed by Saul Bass, who is sometimes credited with directing the shower-bath scene in *Psycho*.

A WEDDING

US 1978

Director Robert Altman

Written by John Considine, Patricia

Resnick, Allan Nicholls,

Robert Altman

With: Carol Burnett, Paul Dooley,

Amy Stryker, Mia Farrow,

Dennis Christopher, Geraldine

Chaplin, Vittorio Gassman

Robert Altman, the director of *A Wedding*, was one of the top names in American cinema in the 1970s. He directed *M*A*S*H*, *The Long Good-bye* and *McCabe & Mrs Miller*, which I would offer up as his best films. Not all of his were great, of course: he was also the director responsible for the interminable *Quintet* and the truly awful *A Perfect Couple*. But at his best, there was no other film-maker like him. He was a master of the big ensemble film, much of which appeared to be improvised or scripted by the actors. His most complex extravaganzas were the brilliant *Nashville* and *A Wedding*.

A Wedding is the story of an East Coast society wedding. They are a horrible, racist bunch, consumed with avarice. Most of the bride's family refuse to turn up because the groom's father is an Italian, played by that wonderful actor Vittorio Gassman. He's great. Everybody's great. The huge cast is impeccable. In fact, one has the feeling that the parts were written for the actors, which perhaps they were: the principal screen-writing credit goes to John Considine, who plays the head of security at the wedding; one of his co-authors, Patricia Resnick, plays a female security guard; and the other writer, Allan Nicholls, plays the man videotaping the happy event.

Also notable, and very characteristic of Altman, is the sound design. Much use is made of overlapping and off-screen dialogue to enhance the characterisations and make the film funnier. Almost all of Altman's films are very funny, even his serious ones. *A Wedding* starts off pretty funny and gets better and better, darker and more ironic than you would ever dream it could.



YOJIMBO

Japan 1961

Director Akira Kurosawa

Written by Ryuzo Kikushima,

Akira Kurosawa

With: Toshiro Mifune, Eijiro Tono,

Seizaburo Kawazu, Isuzu

Yamada, Hiroshi Tachikawa,

Susumu Fukita

Yojimbo is a samurai film made by the greatest of all film directors, Akira Kurosawa. If the story seems familiar, it may be because it was remade, in 1964, by Sergio Leone with the title *A Fistful of Dollars*.

While Leone's film — his first with Clint Eastwood — is good, Kurosawa's is the work of a maestro. It's completely cynical and very funny. The hero, played by Toshiro Mifune, is a masterless samurai who hires himself out as a professional killer and bodyguard to both sides in a faction-ridden one-horse town. (*Yojimbo* means 'bodyguard' or 'bouncer'.) As soon as one side gets the upper hand, Mifune dumps them and joins the other guys for more money, with death and destruction the inevitable results. Kurosawa's big theme is human existence: Why are we here? Does anything matter? Is there a possibility of doing good?

THE WICKER MAN

Britain 1973

Director: Robin Hardy

Written by: Anthony Shaffer

With: Edward Woodward, Britt Ekland,
Diane Cilento, Ingrid Pitt,
Christopher Lee, Lindsay Kemp

The Wicker Man was written by Anthony Shaffer, the author of *Sleuth*. Cinefantastique called it, rather optimistically, the *Citizen Kane* of horror films. Its British director was Robin Hardy, who formerly specialised in television commercials. It has a cult reputation despite the fact that most of those who rate it very highly have not seen the original version.

It was initially 102 minutes long, but the owners of the film decided that it would be much better if they cut 15 minutes and put it out as the second half of a double bill. (This was back in the days when you used to get two films for the price of one.) So they cut it down to 87 minutes and, in 1973, released it on a double bill with Nicolas Roeg's *Dan? Look Now*. As the years went by and the film's cult reputation grew, attempts were made to restore the missing portions, but most of the original negative had gone missing. Apparently it had ended up in the pylons that support the M4 motorway.



Pagan delights – THE WICKER MAN

The 'original version' has now been partly restored for television. However, there's one principal scene still missing, an early sequence in which Edward Woodward, who plays a Scottish police officer, is introduced, and we're told he's engaged to be married and has not yet 'known a woman'. This is worth bearing in mind as you enjoy the pagan delights of *The Wicker Man*, which include Lindsay Kemp, the mime artist, Christopher Lee without his cape, and Britt Ekland dubbed into Scottish.



In some of his films – *Ikiru*, for example, or *Rashomon* – good triumphs in a compromised and temporary sort of way. In others – *Yojimbo*, *Ran* and *The Throne of Blood* – all notions of good and evil are meaningless; everybody's bad. If you win, it's just through concentration, cleverness or strength.

Before this year's Oscars, various Americans tried to get Kurosawa to agree to be presented with an honorary Oscar for his services to film. The great man quickly put them in their place. On worldwide television, he announced that the Academy Awards were self-congratulatory bullshit, said that he was ashamed at how little he had learned in 50 years of film-making, and that he would have to keep working until he died, in the hope that he would one day get it right.

DEEP BACKGROUND

For those seeking further information on cult movies, the following books are suggested:

- *Cult Movies* (volumes 1-3) by Danny Peary, published by Sidgwick & Jackson, 1989.
- *The Psychotronic Encyclopaedia of Film* by Michael Weldon, published by Plexus, 1989.
- *Film Noir: An encyclopaedic reference guide* edited by Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward, published by Bloomsbury, 1989.
- *Joe Bob Goes to the Drive-In* by Joe Bob Briggs, published by Penguin, 1989.
- *The I Was a Teenage Juvenile Delinquent... Rock 'n' Roll Horror Beach Party Movie Book* by Alan Beltrick, published by Plexus, 1988.
- *Hollywood Babylon* by Kenneth Anger, published by Arrow Books, new edition 1986.
- *The Golden Turkey Awards* by Michael and Harry Medved, published by Angus and Robertson, 1980.

These and other books, as well as posters, stills, soundtracks and all kinds of ephemera, may be found at the following shops and mail-order firms:

• Arnolfini Bookshop

First floor, 16 Narrow Quay
Bristol BS1 4QA
Tel: (0272) 299191
Open: 10 am-7 pm, Mon-Sat;
12.30-6.30 pm, Sun

• B. H. Blackwell

50 Broad Street
Oxford OX1 3BQ
Tel: (0865) 792792
Open: 9 am-6 pm, Mon-Sat

• The Cinema Bookshop

13-14 Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3NH
Tel: (071) 637 0206
Open: 10.30 am-5.30 pm, Mon-Sat

• The Cinema Shop

45 Summer Row
Birmingham B3 1JJ
Tel: (021) 236 9879
Open: 11.30 am-5.30 pm, Tues-Sat

• Geoffrey Clifton: Performing Arts Bookshop

44 Brazenose Street
Manchester M2 5EA
Tel: (061) 831 7118
Open: 10 am-5.30 pm, Mon-Sat

• Cornerhouse Books

70 Oxford Street
Manchester M1 5NH
Tel: (061) 228 7621 ext 165
Open: 10.30 am-6 pm, Mon-Sat

• A. E. Cox

21 Cecil Road
Iichen, Southampton SO2 7HX
Tel: (0703) 447989
Mail order only

• Richard Dalby

4 Westbourne Park
Scarborough, N. Yorks. YO12 4AT
Tel: (0723) 377049
Mail order only

• Dress Circle

57-59 Monmouth Street
Upper St Martin's Lane
London WC2H 9DG
Tel: (071) 836 8279
Open: 10 am-7 pm, Mon-Sat

• 58 Dean Street Records

58 Dean Street
London W1V 5HH
Tel: (071) 437 4500/734 8777
Open: 10 am-6.30 pm, Mon-Thurs;
10 am-7 pm, Fri-Sat

• Film Magic

18 Garsmouth Way
Watford, Herts.
Open: 11 am-7 pm, Mon-Fri

• Filmworld

De Courcy's Arcade, 5 Cresswell Lane
Glasgow G12
Tel: (041) 339 5373
Open: 10 am-5.30 pm, Mon-Sat;
12-5 pm, Sun

• Anne FitzSimons

62 Scooby Road
Scotby, Carlisle
Cumbria CA4 8BD
Tel: (0228) 513815
Mail order only

• Flashbacks

8 Silver Place, Beak Street
London W1R 3LJ
Tel: (071) 437 8562
Open: 10.30 am-7 pm, Mon-Sat

• Forbidden Planet

71 New Oxford Street
London WC1A 1DG
Tel: (071) 836 4179/379 6042
Open: 10 am-7 pm, Mon, Wed, Fri;
10 am-8 pm, Thurs; 10 am-6 pm, Sat

• Heffers Booksellers

20 Trinity Street
Cambridge CB2 3NG
Tel: (0223) 358351
Open: 9 am-5.30 pm, Mon-Sat

• David Henry

36 Meon Road
London W3 8AN
Tel: (081) 993 2859
Mail order only

• The Media Bookshop

Book Base, P.O. Box 1057
Quinton, Birmingham B17 8EZ
Tel: (021) 429 2606
Mail order only

• MOMI Bookshop

South Bank
London SE1 8XT
Tel: (071) 928 3535
Open: 10 am-9 pm, Tues-Sat; 10 am-7 pm,
Sun; 12-7 pm, Mon

• Movie Finds

4 Ravenslea Road
London SW12 8SB
Mail order only

• National Museum of Photography, Film & Television

Princes View
Bradford BD5 0TR
Tel: (0274) 727488
Open: 11 am-6 pm, Tues-Sun

• Offstage

37 Chalk Farm Road
London NW1 8AJ
Tel: (071) 485 4996
Open: 10 am-5.30 pm, Tues-Sat;
11 am-5.30 pm, Sun

• Tyneside Cinema Bookshop

10 Pilgrim Street
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 6QG
Tel: (091) 232 5592
Open: 10 am-5 pm, Mon-Sat

• Vintage Magazine Co.

39-41 Brewer Street
London W1R 3FD
Tel: (071) 439 8525
Open: 10 am-7 pm, Mon-Sat; 2-7 pm, Sun

247 Camden High Street

London NW1
Tel: (071) 482 0587
Open: 10 am-6 pm, Mon-Fri;
10 am-7 pm, Sat-Sun

• Peter Wood

20 Stonehill Road
Great Shelford
Cambridge CB2 5JL
Tel: (0223) 842419
Mail order only

• A. Zwemmer

80 Charing Cross Road
London WC2
Tel: (071) 836 4710 ext 21
Open: 9.30 am-6 pm, Mon-Fri;
10 am-5.30 pm, Sat

As well as these shops it is also worth watching out for the increasingly frequent film memorabilia fairs and sales which take place nationwide.

The Moviedrones



ALEX COX was born in Liverpool, read Law at Oxford and studied film and television at Bristol University. From there he went to UCLA Film School on a Fulbright Scholarship, where he wrote an experimental comedy – *Sleep is for Sissies* – which won the Jack Nicholson Screenwriting Award.

His films as director are: *Repo Man* (1984), *Sid and Nancy* (1986), *Straight to Hell* (1987), *Walker* (1987).

He lives near Almeria in southern Spain – famous as the location for many Spaghetti Westerns.

NICK JONES was born in Essex, read English and watched films at University College London. As well as producing *Moviedrome* he has made programmes on the Hammer horror Studios and directors Fritz Lang and Sergio Leone among others.

He lives in West London – which has never been the location for a Spaghetti Western.

Published in 1990 by Broadcasting Support Services to accompany BBC2's *Moviedrome* (third season shown May–September 1990)



Written by Alex Cox & Nick Jones

Edited by Nancy Dain

Designed by First Impression

Printed by Haynes Cannon Ltd.

Distributed by Broadcasting Support Services

With special thanks to Michele Colyer.



Broadcasting Support Services provides follow-up services for viewers and listeners.

For further copies, please send a cheque or postal order for £2.75, made payable to BSS to:

Moviedrome
PO. Box 7
London W3 6XJ