

FIRST FRAME

British
Film
Editors

CRAFTING THE MOVING IMAGE

AUTUMN 2023



A Celebration of The Archers in Technicolor!

“Ultimately, empathy is what I think makes editors spectacular. It’s not a technical job. It’s a psychological, emotional job. The more you connect to the people that you’re looking at, the more the audience will connect with them, whether or not they’re good or bad. You have to understand them.”

Timothy Good, ACE BFE, editor *The Last of Us*



RENÉE EDWARDS
CHAIR

Hello BFE Members,
Hello BFE Members,

We hope you have some great summer memories to warm you up as we prepare and put in place the structures required to navigate and embrace all that autumn and winter offer. We know it may be a difficult time for some members, and urge you to reach out to someone if you need support.

We are heartened by the growth of BFE related events in the regions and continue to encourage members to organise gatherings with our support and that of our generous sponsors. We continue to expand the online events thanks to our considerate participants. These recently included learning about Louper Software and how it eas-

ily connects us when working remotely, and streaming our Pride event from Universal Production Music. We are planning a new season of events with stellar editors and composers, as well as specialists in subtitling and Script Sync. We know there are genres still to explore with editors and look forward to those.

Thank you for your membership. We really are making a difference in the editing community, and do remember to ask for your post nominal if you are a full member. We are working on ways to support members with this.

Thank you to the board and team, our sponsors and supporters. Do read our pages in Televisual, as well as our beloved *Freeze Frame*. As BFE goes from strength to strength we look forward to celebrating in style with you all during the 4th BFE Cut Above Awards and watching your favourites.

All good things,

Renée



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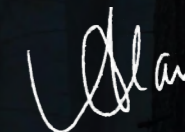


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From The Editor

Hullo everyone. Welcome to your biannual 68 pages of all things film, TV and editing related. All ad-free! As I had no takers for the Bolex Camera pin offered as a bribe in the last issue, I was tempted to up the ante. But no. No bribes this issue but the broken record keeps spinning. Please, please consider contributing to *First Frame*. One of our number volunteered to help me with the sourcing and writing of pieces so a big shout out to Stephen Barton-King. You'll be hearing from him in these pages next issue. While I'm enjoying a surfeit of spare time right now, I know I'm going to be abroad working long hours from January to March 2024. This means that I really need to have all the content for the next issue in place by Christmas. That's not that far away so anything anyone else can do to help fill my 19th effort - out in March next year - then you know where I am. Thank you in advance.



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ENJOYING THE MOMENT

Celebrating those 'moments' that transcend the art and craft of cinema by Camus of Cineoutsider

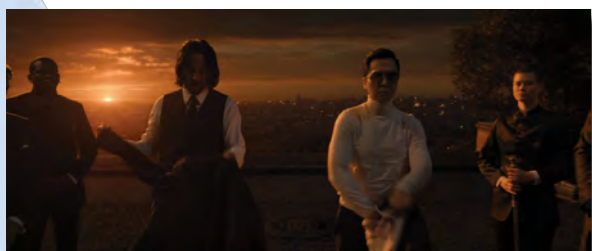
"Oh, if life were made of moments, even now and then a bad one, but if life were made of moments then you'd never know you'd had one."

The Baker's Wife from the sublime musical
Into The Woods by Stephen Sondheim

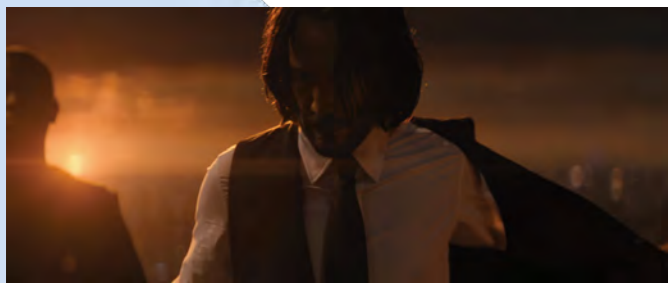
"Bush denied she was a perfectionist in the studio, saying: 'I think it's important that things are flawed ... That's what makes a piece of art interesting sometimes – the bit that's wrong or the mistake you've made that's led onto an idea you wouldn't have done otherwise.'"

Kate Bush, BBC Radio Four, *Front Row*

In every film there are many opportunities for 'moments', short but hugely satisfying seconds when everything seems as if creativity has not only a sense of humour but also no limits. Often these are mistakes, left in for their serendipitous nature. Some moments are unexpected, some work because they are oh so predictable. Some fall out of the sky and others sneak up on you. All have one thing in common; they delight whether in the middle of a tense action sequence, a horror effect, a love scene or a knockabout farce. Their DNA is human but their effect divine. I'm not talking about pay offs to long signposted plot threads (Shyamalan's glasses of water in **Signs** is a good example of this). I'm talking about the after thoughts, the being on a soundstage experiencing a light bulb moment and saying "What if we did this...?" They are the unplanned accidents, the metaphorical water droplets that slink cheerfully through tight armour-plated plot.

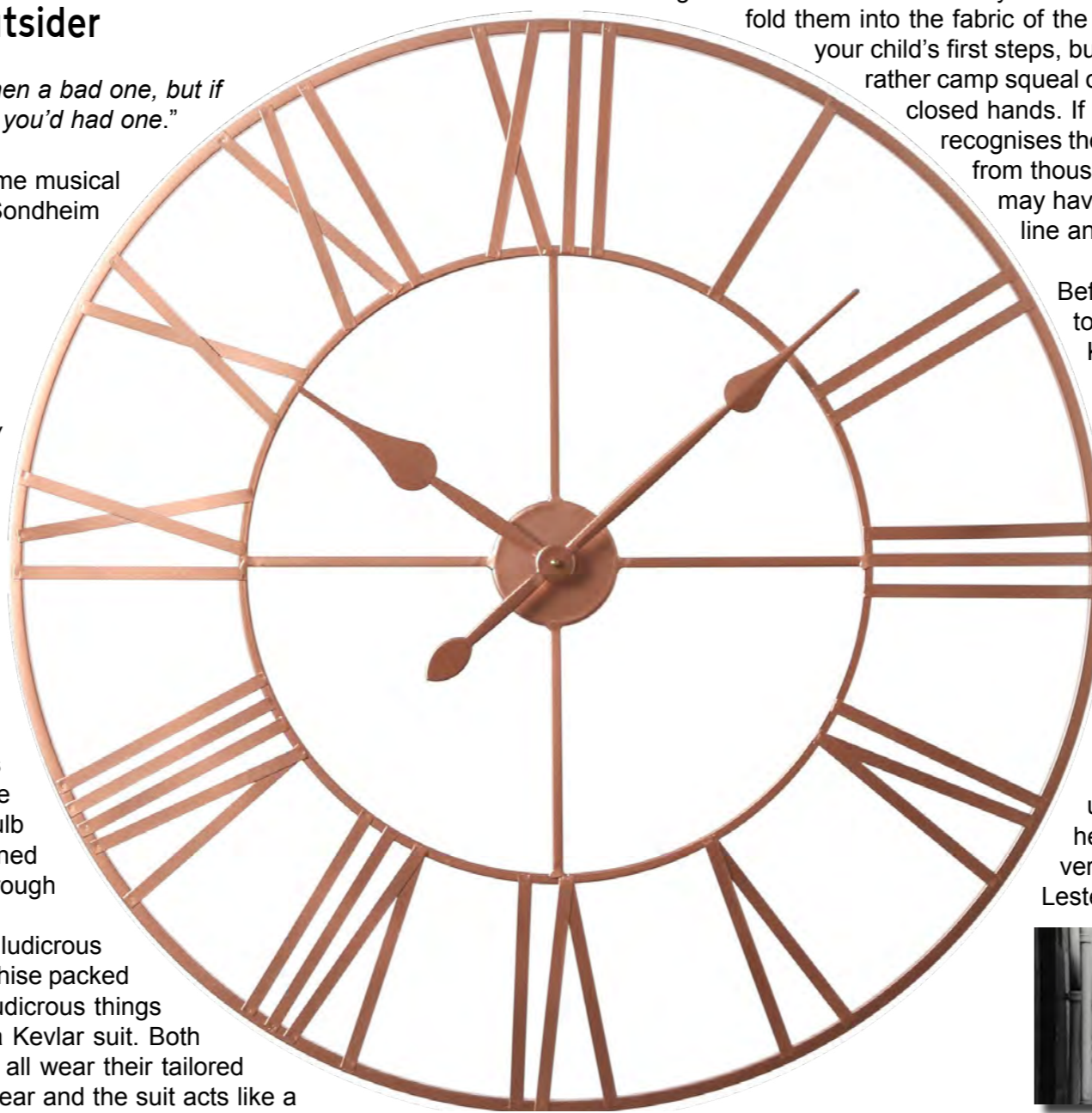


One of the most ludicrous things in a film franchise packed to the rafters with ludicrous things is the invention of a Kevlar suit. Both good and bad guys all wear their tailored bulletproof formal wear and the suit acts like a normal suit. In **John Wick Chapter 4**, Keanu Reeves and his enemies are forever flipping up a part of their suits to stop a head shot hitting the target. The effect is aided by the tiniest 'ting' on the soundtrack and a presumably CGI spark. It's subtle but these effects are there.



So what's the moment? John is forced to duel his friend Caine and to this end, they must divest their armour. As they do so, the scores of spent bullet tips drop unseen from their clothing making an almost comic barrage of tinkling sounds. I actually giggled at this moment. Priceless.

A movie by definition (almost) is planned, directed and assiduously controlled. There are great moments in animation to be sure but none that have been accidental for obvious reasons. The ultimate metaphor or indeed condition of that tightest of control is CG effects. The filmmaker, by proxy of skilled digital artists and technicians, has control of every pixel of the screen. Accidents don't happen in this milieu and if they do, it takes a brave filmmaker to present them to an audience. There was a flaw in the render of a Gollum CG scene that resulted in his hair sticking up vertically throughout the action. I didn't make this up. It's in the Extras of **Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers**. When that control is relaxed sometimes miracles happen. Let's not get too messianic here. I'm talking about those moments that you subconsciously recognise as mistakes but accept them and subsequently fold them into the fabric of the drama. They make you feel not so much as if you've just witnessed your child's first steps, but provide a gentle nudge that makes you gleeful nonetheless. It's that rather camp squeal of delight possibly accompanied by a jiggle of shoulders and Wallace's closed hands. If you're not that effusive, it is definitely accompanied by the smile that recognises the right choice has been made. The filmmakers choose those moments from thousands of others and a movie without a mistake or misstep feels as if it may have come off an assembly line or something put together by the bottom line and not a single free, independent, creative mind.



Before diving in to some examples, let me state my favourite 'mistake' to serve as permission for all the others. Even the great Stanley Kubrick knew the food would slip back down the straw in a scene from **2001** (set supposedly in Zero G). But Stanley was shooting in England, a place not renowned for its lack of gravitational pull. Did he tear his hair out for a solution (even I could come up with a solution to that little dilly of a problem)? No. He left it in. If Kubrick can pass an all too soulful reminder of the human element in the film-making process, then so can we all. Remember, Kubrick was also happy with the *Dawn of Man* front projection giveaway of the leopard's shining eyes throwing the projection back into the lens. I believe the word he used was 'cool'!

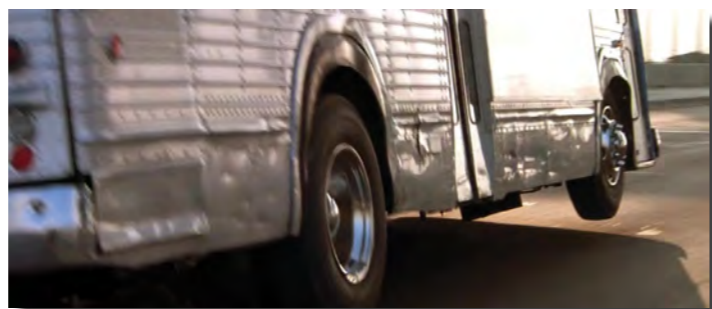
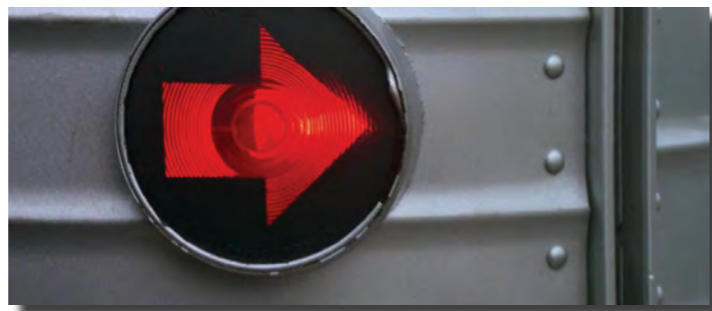
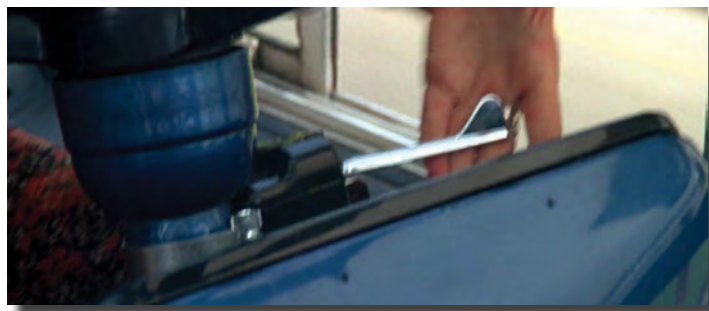
Be clear that I'm not talking about simple mistakes such as the hapless stormtrooper who smacks his head on a door frame on the Death Star in the original **Star Wars**. I'm talking about those moments that tell us things about character or story seemingly made up on the spot; things that seem so extemporaneous, it makes your heart soar. One of the most famous happy accidents happens in the very first shot of a sixties movie directed by the then irrepressible Richard Lester.



The most famous four people in the world are running away from their fans. I'm sure Lester took a very loose stand directorially in his **A Hard Day's Night**. The Beatles weren't actors but had very specific characters nonetheless. The least defined or 'known' of the fab four, George Harrison, takes a painful tumble on a stone pave-

ment in a movie (and I chose my words carefully) that would be simply impossible to perform regardless of the skill of the actor. A trip and stumble like that has to be real and this little piece of business almost defined what was to follow – happy accidents. Yes, there was a script but you come away with the impression that each of the four was simply being themselves (hard for actors, that talent) while Wilfred Brambell and John Junkin did their best to propel a silly plot along. George's tumble (and yes, it really looks painful because it was real) succeeds in setting up the 'je ne sais quoi' of an entire movie. No mean feat.

One of the classiest bits of business I've seen in the many years I've been paying to be left in the dark concerns an act that would have prompted me to express undying devotion to the performer concerned (if it was her idea). I will give the writers credit here because it certainly feels like it was an organic part of the sequence but because of its nature, I'm giving it 'moment' status. Idly thinking of who might have come up with the moment explains a lot if Joss Whedon's rewrites and polishes of this particular movie's screenplay are to be accepted. Here's the sitch (as JW may say). You're driving a bus that cannot go below 50 mph or it will explode. It is being tailed by lots of police cars. At your elbow is an attractive FBI man who looks like, for all the world, that Neo fellow from **The Matrix**. You've all been told that up ahead is a right turn that the Stig would balk at but the driver has no choice. Everyone could die. Everyone's fate is in her... feet. Her hands are simply steering. Yes, it's the movie that bestowed fame upon Sandra Bullock, **Speed**, directed by a Dutchman who seems to have disappeared off Hollywood's radar like standard definition, Jan de Bont. Death defying action required. She's about to make the right turn of her life... What does she do?



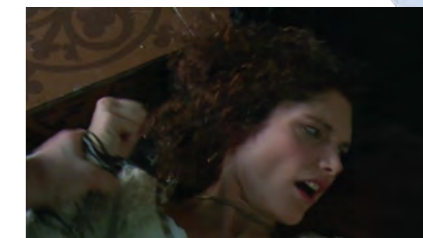
She indicates. Oh my. She indicates. Here is a bus accompanied by scores of official vehicles. Everyone, with the exception of the panhandler on 31st street, knows the situation and Sandra Bullock indicates to let everyone know – who already know – that she's about to turn right. It's the sort of moment that makes men like myself lose their common sense. Compare this with the tiny two fingered hand movement of Zhang Ziyi at the end of her extraordinary tea room fight in **Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon**... another moment to be sure, one that made me fall utterly in love.

Let's have a scene in a movie that shows the two leads they weren't crazy after all. We're three quarters of the way through the film and both leads have been implanted with an image. She paints it, he sculpts it. Eventually after meeting up, they set off cross country and in a rather self-important "Oh, this is significant!" scene – an attribute which we'll forgive because I adored the film – they see the image that's been taunting them... Sticking out from the flatlands of western America is Devil's Tower, the iconic terrestrial image from Spielberg's **Close Encounters of the Third Kind**. Melinda Dillon and Richard Dreyfuss stop the car and slowly climb the bank where a sweeping camera move and John Williams' soaring symphonic orchestra say "You're not crazy!" The grandeur and awe of the whole mise-en-scene is very subtly undermined by the fact that Melinda Dillon slips as she's walking up the dusty slope. There must have been other takes but Spielberg chose the one with the most humanity. Bravo.

As this article could conceivably never end (moments come to me as I type) I will simply list ten of my favourites and invite you to think of those that mean something to you. In absolutely no order whatsoever save the firing neuron order in my brain, here are ten small treats that may have passed you by...

Robin Hood Prince Of Thieves

Yes, yes. Forget Robin Hood's Californian accent and Alan Rickman's Sheriff of Nottingham stealing the show but it's a Rickman scene that prompts this singular moment. In something of a hurry to consummate his hastily arranged marriage to Maid Marion, Rickman has to rape Elizabeth Mastrantonio. Yes, we know Robin will rescue her but the lead up features a shot from the ground at Marion's feet as Nottingham prises her legs open. I suspect the comic tone of Rickman's frustration would be wildly inappropriate in today's climate. To my shock at such a potentially horrible moment, what follows is sublime.



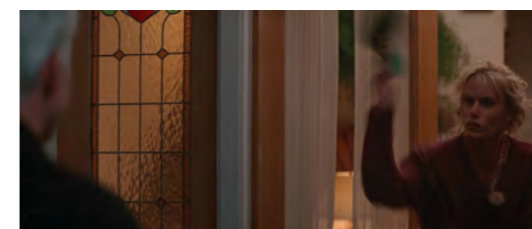
Nottingham's witch, played by a barely recognisable Geraldine McKewan, places a small pillow beneath Mastrantonio's head. The gesture is enough but Rickman's exasperation at such thoughtfulness is the icing on this moment's cake.

It Happened One Night

Frank Capra's wonderful knockabout romantic comedy still stands up all these years. Don't be vintage-averse – check it out. Clark Gable is accompanying a spoiled brat heiress (Claudette Colbert) across the country so she can meet up with and marry her beau. Gable is the wise ass reporter, who of course, succumbs to her charms. Halfway through the film, Gable has to scare someone away and after successfully convincing the sap that he's part of the mob, he sees the guy off with a jaunty spit that would have been the cool full stop at the end of the scene. The ejected saliva lands on his shoulder. He's just an average schmuck and we love him for it.

Roxanne

Steve Martin's take on Cyrano De Bergerac is choc-a-block full of wonderful touches, most of them scripted no doubt. But in the final argument between Martin and Daryl Hannah, she opens the door of her house and throws his hat at him. Martin manages to catch it in a few goes, each one knocking the hat up into the air until he finally brings it under control. That's not in the script but it's pure Martin.



Local Hero

Burt Lancaster wants to build an oil refinery on a charming Scottish fishing village and the villagers are thrilled (money, of course). Stopping the deal is Ben, the local beachcomber who actually owns a significant part of the beach. It's up to Mac (Peter Riegert) and Fulton Mackay to do a deal, mano-a-mano. Mackay picks up a handful of sand and asks "Would you pay me a pound for every grain of sand I have in my hand?" Then, some sand falls away and like the old pro he was, he seems to improvise a line (I simply cannot imagine this was in Bill Forsyth's wonderful script though you never know). "Saved you a few pounds there..." Magic.



Road Games

No actor on planet earth could have done what Stacy Keach did with a motorcycle trying to go after a suspect. Forget script, forget planning. That machine took Keach for a ride in the most marvellous way. It's close as a moment to actually taking you out of the movie because the moment is so perfectly real. It is also followed by one of the best deliveries of the word "Shit!" in cinema history.



Brazil

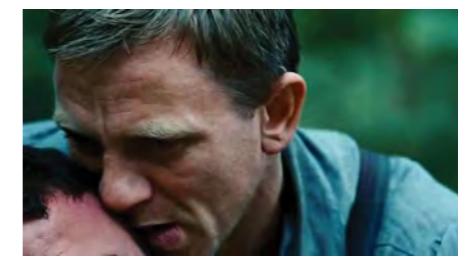
Gilliam's Orwellian fantasy – still strong after all these years – has a small moment in it that delights me every time I see it. Sam Lowry (Jonathan Pryce) meets his mother (Katherine Hellmond) at a swanky drinks do. She's trying to introduce him for the second time to a prospective girlfriend, Shirley (Kathryn Pogson). They sit together, awkward in each other's company and Pryce tries to defuse the situation. Pogson, her mouth held in a wrap-around brace, finally summons up some honesty and to Pryce's surprise, she says "I don't like you either." Enter Michael Palin and Pryce gets up standing on Pogson's toe as he does so.



Watch Pogson's face – again, no way could this be scripted. It goes from regrettable honesty to a little sympathy, cut off by acute pain and catching Pryce's eye, her face instantly snaps back into "Think nothing of it!" territory and when Pryce has moved off, glowering anger and resentment settle. All this in about three seconds. It's a piece of acting I've never forgotten. Wonderful.

Defiance

Mentioned on the commentary by the director so I know this moment was 100% serendipity... It's World War II, occupied Poland. Liev Schreiber has just been told his wife is dead and Daniel Craig goes to comfort him. Schreiber smashes his head against a tree pre-rigged with blood and to the director's dismay, on what was developing into the best take, the blood did not appear... until at the climax of the emotion, a small drop appeared running from underneath Schreiber's hair. You cannot plan these things. It was sheer serendipity that the best directors take advantage of – as did Edward Zwick.



Doctor Who

Not a movie moment but a TV moment worthy of praise. People who go that extra mile are generally regarded very positively in the film and TV business. The Mill is a VFX company that has done some amazing work and as Russell T. Davies said when they don't turn in amazing work, it's because the producers haven't given them the resources to do so. But in one Tardis dematerialisation (I believe the episode is *The Unquiet Dead* from Eccleston's era) there are snow flakes which fall and disperse from the Tardis's ridges and they spiral away in a tiny piece of detail that some wonderful digital VFX person has chosen to add. That's going the extra mile.

The Exorcist

Not strictly a moment but because I know so much about this movie, it stands as one because of the truth of the performance on offer. The actor playing Father Dwyer is no actor. He is in fact a real man of God (Reverend William O'Malley S.J.) who's still active. Director Friedkin saw something in him and he does a great job at being father Karras' best friend. But he's no actor so in the more demanding scenes – or one in particular – Friedkin had to give him some, uh... inspiration. Look at the touching final scene between the two friends. O'Malley acts like he was born to it, his voice and hand trembling as he performs the last rites.



There's a good reason for this thespianic excellence. Seconds before the take, Friedkin asked O'Malley if he trusted him. "Yes," said O'Malley and Friedkin smacked him hard across the face... "Action!" Look at the scene. You can almost see the welt on his face. Priceless. Not sure anyone would get away with that today.

Legend

Again, practically unscripted but you must always doubt that anything can happen on a Ridley Scott set without the maestro having included any potential outcomes in his multilayer confection of a movie. Mia Sara is a fairy tale princess, Lili, being wooed by Jack, a young Tom Cruise. The movie did not light up the box office despite the astounding creation of 'Darkness' as performed by Tim Curry (artist) and aided by the stunning work of Rob Bottin (make-up artist). This is a very simple moment but a magical one nonetheless. The princess is being courted and her coy behaviour is driving Jack nuts, as it's designed to. At one point near some greenery, she stops and turns.



One coil of her curly hair has looped around a thin branch and as she turns it unravels, slips off the branch and re-coils. It's a beautiful moment that I'm sure Scott made up on the spot.

Pfeiffer, Douglas and Weaver

Finally, I want to add enormous respect to three actresses who went that extra mile performing difficult actions and managing to achieve those difficult actions in camera authentically. In one instance the cast all broke character forcing the editor to cut out of the key shot way too early. All moments were scripted as such but knowing the actresses did each for real just makes me smile.



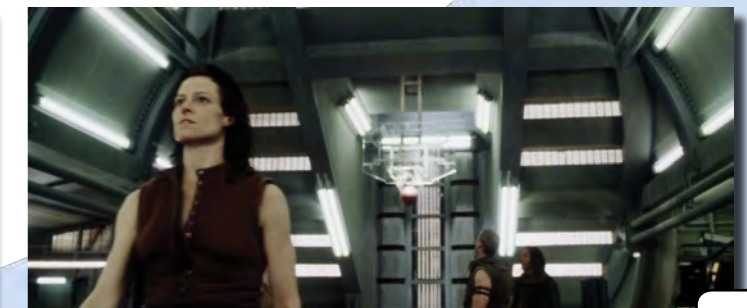
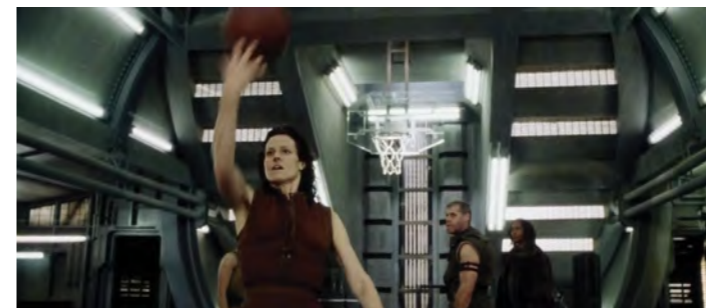
Michelle Pfeiffer as Catwoman in **Batman Returns** breaks into a sporting goods store and takes a few practice cracks with her new bullwhip. In one shot (and a 'making of' clip of a behind the scenes confirms she actually did this), Pfeiffer whips the heads off the shop dummies one after the other in one take and the editor allows Pfeiffer her moment by not cutting in to the action.

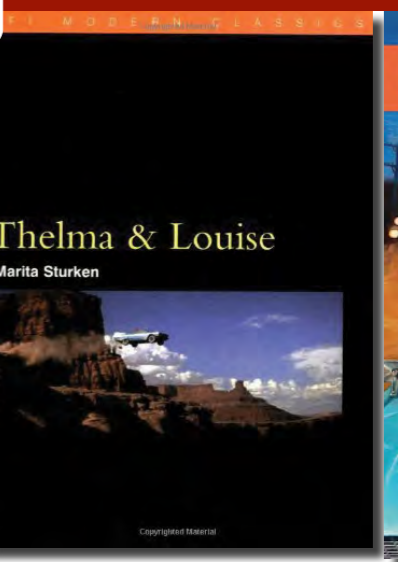
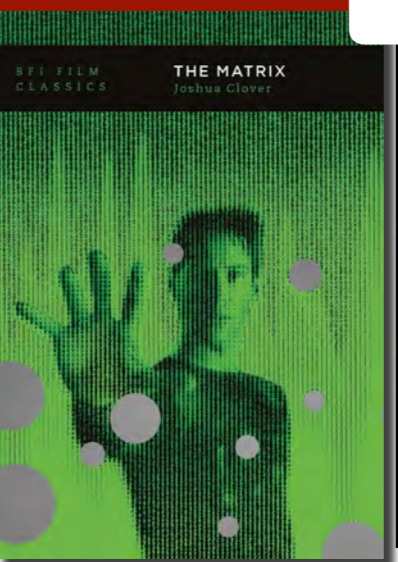
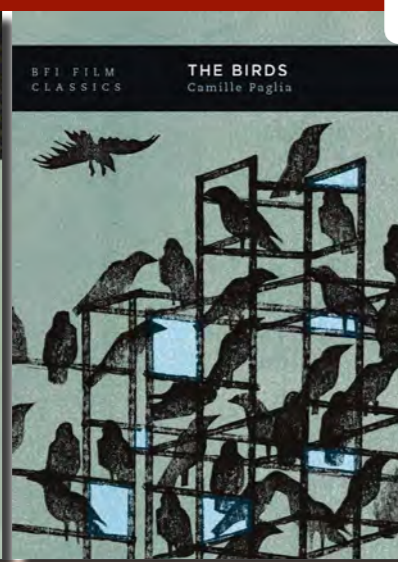


Sarah Douglas as Ursa in **Superman 2** is engaged in a fight with Superman partnered by her two fellow super villains. Director Richard Donner blithely directed Douglas to 'skateboard-like' stamp on the manhole cover to flip it into her hand and then menacingly throw it at Superman. She did it perfectly and was taken aback why Donner was so surprised. He was convinced Douglas would never have been able to do it.

Finally there's Sigourney Weaver as a Ripley clone in **Alien Resurrection**... Showing off her physical superiority to the motley group that's boarded the space station, she turns her back to the basketball net. In one perfect over the shoulder throw, she makes the shot. She said that it was one of the greatest days of her life. Wow!

As we travel further into the digital realm, there are fewer and fewer moments because of the nature of the 'ambition of perfection'. Here's a plaintive cry to keep idiosyncrasy and human fallibility as part of the movie creative process. Perfect is merely perfect. Imperfect is much more interesting...





FUEL OF PASSION

A CELEBRATION OF BFI CLASSICS BY NICHOL SUZIE ASSAM

In the words of the book series' page 3...

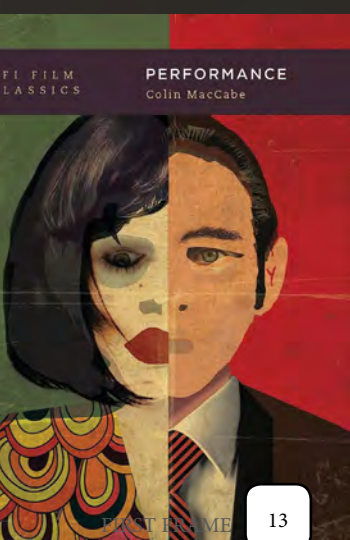
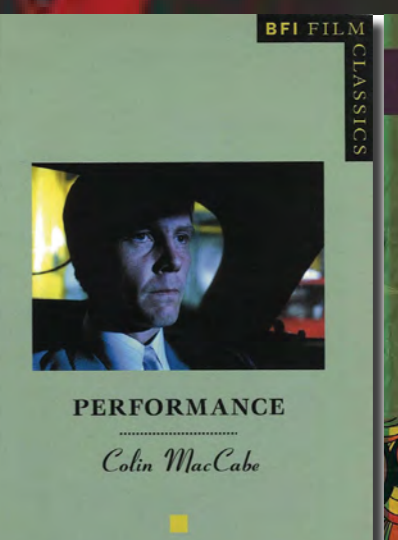
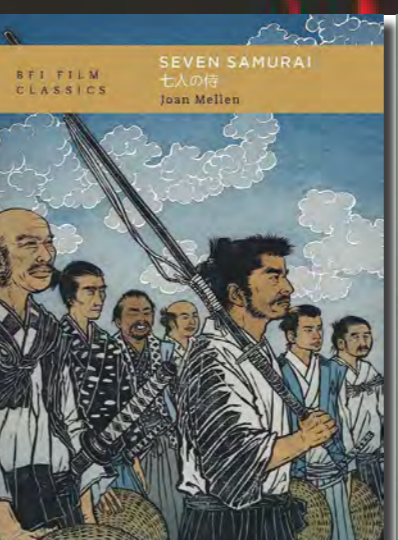
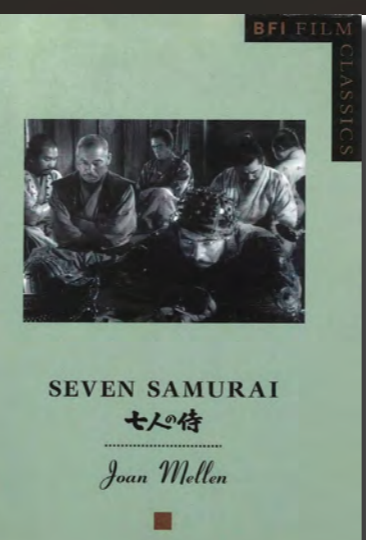
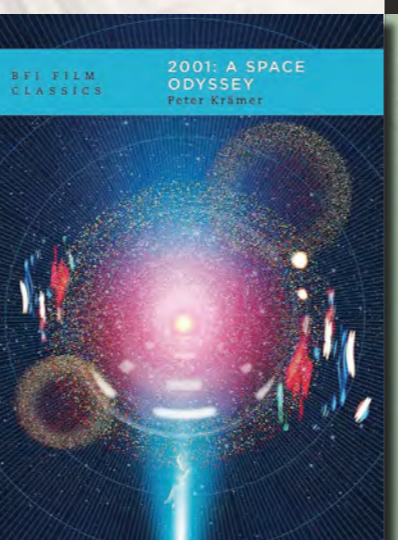
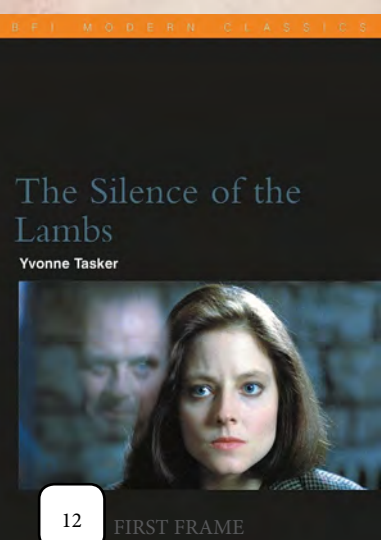
"The BFI Film Classic Series introduces, interprets and celebrates landmarks of world cinema. Each volume offers an argument for the film's 'classic' status, together with discussion of its production and reception history, its place within a genre or national cinema, an account of its technical or aesthetic importance, and in many cases the author's personal response to the film."

You know what is so refreshing about that mission statement? The final clause. Film criticism, since the dawn of time, has endeavoured to be 'objective'. But objectivity is bound up inextricably with the prejudices, character and taste of the critic. So writing about film was predicated on a denial of the subjective experience of said critic. One wise old bird once said (I think it was Oscar Wilde) that "All criticism was autobiography," and he had a point. I've been a *Sight and Sound* magazine subscriber for well over forty years and I never got the impression from their formal reviews if a film was ever truly loved or despised. While the writing standard of the magazine is of the highest calibre, there was always, to me, a little fire missing. I longed for the reviewers to give us a sliver of

their personality but all are constrained by what's expected of the job of professional film reviewer: Intellectual formality, detachment and profound knowledge of cinema. Of course there's cleverness and intellectual rigor but every now and then, I wanted to hear that someone loved the film they were reviewing. It's probably in the subtext and certainly any disregard or criticism is forthright. I quite often dive into the archives of *Sight and Sound's* sister publication *The Monthly Film Bulletin* for contemporary reviews of films I may be covering. Disdain pops up quite a lot. I'm reminded of Stephen Fry's choice to put critics into *Room 101* and their sanctimonious attitude of "If the filmmakers had only come to me before they made the film..."

Well, with the simple idea of letting a critic or writer loose by commissioning them to write 80 to 110 pages on a beloved film, the fire is reignited. At their very best, *BFI Classics* unearth different perspectives allowing you to enjoy the film in question even more or to appreciate the aims and achievements of the filmmakers to a much greater degree. These slim volumes, aperitifs or amuse bouches, serve to heighten the desire to rewatch a film with fresh eyes. Of course, some pretension creeps in now and again but that can be entertaining in its own way. After all, how we take in art is exclusive to ourselves and if you want to believe that a licence plate seen in Hitchcock's **Family Plot** serves as a denouncement of the Catholic Church by the Master of Suspense, then that's your prerogative and choice. The licence plate in question belonged to the screenwriter as a way of not having to worry about it identifying a real person's vehicle.

As you can see from the surrounding covers, the once austere green and grey covers of previous editions have been smartly reimagined by artists giving a flavour of the film itself rather than a straightforward film grab. My favourite revamped cover is for Kevin Jackson's **Withnail and I** for giving us a glimpse of shotputter Jeff Woad, famous for tossing his orb about... If you love movies, you'll just love *BFI Classics*.





The Projection of Style

Is it advantageous to editors to have their own 'style'?

by

Alan Miller BFE

I could lay my cards on the table and simply answer my own question with an emphatic "No, it isn't!" but let's delve a little deeper. During a delightful chat with fellow Governor Lindsey Dillon laying the grounds for the acceptance of part-time working in the industry (see page 33), she shared with me a question that an exec had asked probing how robust the idea would be. They said "But what if your style of editing clashes with the other editor's you're working with?" This thorny little problem is directly in sync with issues raised in the previous *First Frame*... the pigeonholing of editors being known for one 'style' of editing. My knee jerk response was to deny the practical usefulness of a personal style across the board. To reduce it to baby colours, if I was really good with red paint and only painted with that colour, I am sacrificing opportunities to work with directors who like blue pictures not to mention the rainbow of all the other colours. The 'style' in the director-editor relationship ideally should be one-way, the director to the editor. Each film is a prototype which is a hugely daunting and liberating concept. Style needs to draped

or projected on to the film. What you bring to the table are two very important things; storytelling craft and yourself, by which I mean your life experience. If you have a 'style', it constricts your choices. A film's editorial 'style' should be director led or to be more philosophical, movie led. Sometimes, like the process of writing a novel when the characters start dictating what direction the book should go in, a film's style may even be dictated by the film itself. Listen to the director of course but also listen to the voice of the emerging work.



Paul Machliss at our Actual Glass of Wine



Often, it will lead you to places you never thought you'd go. Every film is radiantly alive with untapped potential. Find the tap and give it a turn...

Remember Paul Machliss saying how refreshing it was to go from the enormous, expensive tent pole action film *The Flash* to *The Collaboration*, a people talking to people adaptation of a stage play about Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat? Paul has proved himself a fine editor and has steered his career in such a way that shows he's capable of cutting *any* type of movie. This really should be our goal. What's Paul's style? Impeccable craftsmanship, detail oriented, lovely to have in the room? Those are not facets of 'a style'.

"The higher up you go, the more mistakes you are allowed. At the top, if you make enough of them, it's considered to be your style."

Fred Astaire

I cannot think of one thing that would define 'my style'. I asked my wife (an award winning film producer) to help me define it – if it existed at all – and it amounted to being very thorough and thinking things through. That's the craft. Style of editing is something you imprint on the film in collaboration with the director. Or, if you get the chance, you can interpret rushes in your own way before the director gets a chance to take anything in and deliver a cut which may astound them positively or negatively. I'm thinking of Tatiana S. Riegel's screening her first cut of the opening sequence of *Million Dollar Hotel*, where she got barely a response from director Wim Wenders who quite clearly had never envisioned such a cut and was in some shock. But once he returned with a few friends to see Tatiana's work, it stayed as cut. As editors, those moments must resonate strongly, a real punch the air moment.

Then there are producers and directors who see a movie, want their movie to be cut like that movie and so hire the editor. That's logical right? That's how Richard Pearson got the *Quantum of Solace* gig because of his staggering work co-editing *The Bourne Supremacy*, a jump-cut, urgent style presumably driven by director Paul Greengrass to jitter in parallel with the hero's fractured memories. Even Pearson's Wikipedia page starts with the words "mainly associated with action films." And yet Pearson started his career cutting *Muppets in Space* and an Eddie Murphy/Steve Martin comedy, *Bowfinger*. His latest credit is *Lyle, Lyle Crocodile!* That's a C.V. of mostly action or put another way, that's a C.V. *in* action (or if you missed the article in the previous *First Frame*, C.V. can stand for 'cultivating variety'). I have a ridiculous daydream of shooting a small film in the style of director Greengrass and cut it in the rat-a-tat flurry employed by Pearson provisionally titled *Jason Bourne Does The School Run*. The thought of employing the rapid cut aesthetic to something so mundane really tickles me. I may even get around to it someday.



Ana © Eon Productions

But, isn't typecasting how the industry works? Look at Anna de Armas, a superb actress who's had a streak of playing beautiful but deadly agents/assassins. Her fourth super spy outing will be in the next **John Wick** (and for those who've seen **Chapter 4**... it's a prequel but John and Winston will be guest starring). The film industry depends on finding people doing certain things successfully and then getting them to do them again. But of course most actors worth their salt don't want to be typecast in anything. Stars, on the other hand, are often required to be themselves on screen so happily play similar roles for the big bucks. The film industry is often so overwhelmingly capricious because science cannot bring anything to the table. The best hit-making method we had in place was the star system but that's on the wane. If industry power players don't take chances every now and again and think (to use a very tired overused cliché) 'out of the box', then the dandy fop that was Prince George in *Black Adder 3* (Hugh Laurie), would never have become the acerbic misanthrope Dr. Gregory House.



Casting Matt Damon as super spy Jason Bourne was seen as a big risk at the time. Now you can't imagine anyone more suited to play the role.

So let's encourage producers to widen their nets. We are all prey to that insecurity that we are not somehow qualified to edit a feature or we're not suited to 'action' films or haven't the sensitivity for romantic comedies. We must work hard to banish such negativity. There's not an editor on the planet that was born qualified to cut any film. Every one of us has had to cut a film, all genres, TV or feature, for a first time. The currents of luck, talent and perseverance can take us anywhere at any time. Be aware of where they take you and be prepared to snag an opportunity when it presents itself. I write this having just delivered a fine cut to our co-producers in China. The company is in some managerial disarray and we've still not received a reaction. They have had the cut since April! It's mid-

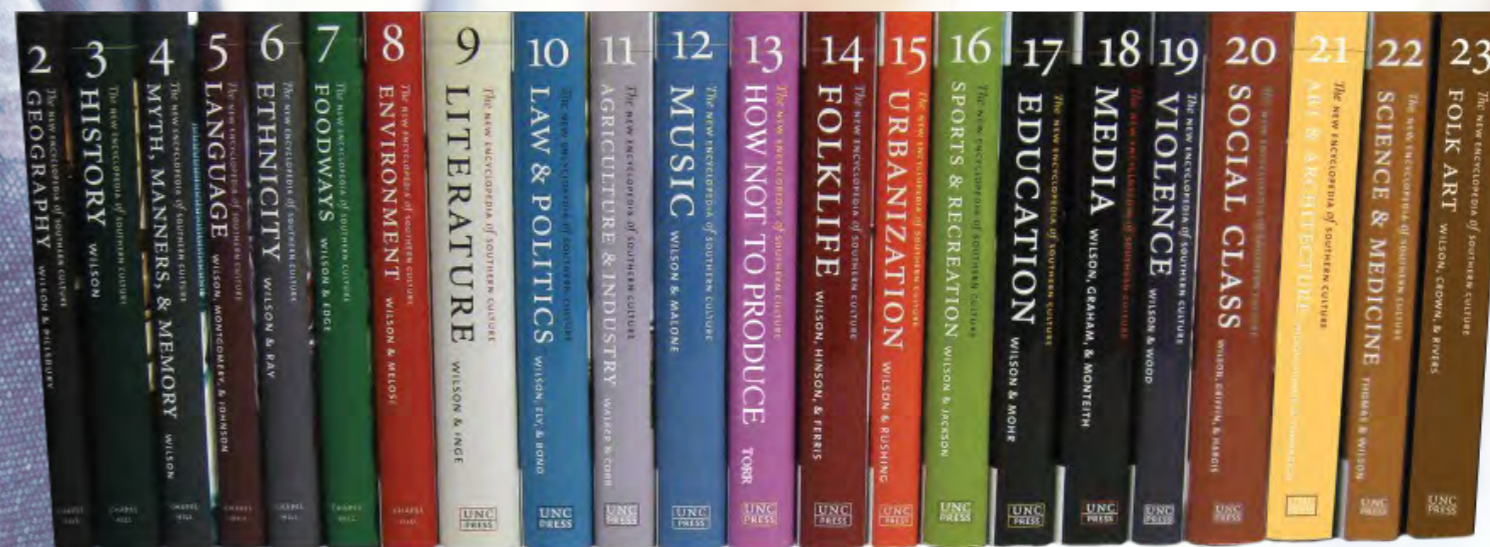
June now and apart from a January job abroad on the horizon, my slate is clean. I rely on the universe to provide something for me to cut in the interim. And as to the style to adopt for the next film, then that's down to the director and the film itself, a unique adventure to look forward to. *First Frame* keeps me busy in the down time.

Postscript on when to 'break' style...

And then there's the isolated deviation from an adopted style to serve the footage. Have you ever tried something quite radical to make a scene work, something so very different from the style of the rest of the film? A topical example would be the lead's 7 minute unbroken monologue in the first season finale of *The Bear*, a single shot. There was a sort of precedent. The entirety of episode 7 was an 18 minute 'oner', a single take and to my shame or credit (jury's still out on that one) I did not notice. I had a sequence whose climax was incredibly rare behaviour of desert lions



taking a seal on the Skeleton Coast. Despite its special nature, the lions enter frame almost leisurely while easily taking the seal. So I had something astounding caught on camera that was less than astounding to watch. A dilemma. The producer Will Steenkamp made a brilliant suggestion. Just before the lions close in, the shot lingered on another seal that Lianne, operating the camera, was convinced was about to be pounced upon. Will's suggestion was to stay on the potential victim for a lot longer than was comfortable, definitely 'out of style' of the film as it had been cut up to that point. It was such a great idea because the suspense just rises and rises. We've seen two lions patrolling and they are headed straight for the beach. This seal is clearly done for. And then enter the lions with *another* seal frantically trying to evade them. The suspense paid off in a surprise, a switch and allowed this extraordinary footage to shine.



THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HOW NOT TO PRODUCE VOL II

BY ED TORR

The idea of an encyclopedia is kind of a delicious absurdity. The notion of capturing the knowledge of absolutely everything under a single publication. It's more a pursuit for a deranged Werner Herzog character: herculean in scope, impossible to resist, doomed to fail, destroying people along the way. How would you even get started? Personally I wouldn't. But as luck would have it, two people, a producer and station exec. I worked with, effectively wrote a sizable percentage of this tome for me, using their careers in place of a keyboard. So here it is, many stories from the BC era (before Covid) -- Parts 3 to 8

The Encyclopedia of How NOT to Produce - Part #3

IGNORE THE IRON TRIANGLE

For those unfamiliar with the iron triangle it goes like this: "There's speed, there's cost, and there's quality. Choose 2. You can't have the 3rd."

Several thoughts on this:

- Actually, you can have all 3. More on that later.
- You can also fail at all 3. That's more common. It's the defining hallmark of producers who don't know how to produce.
- Those producers typically spin it positively, with sighs and bromides... "We're just trying to make lemonade from lemons!", but what they're really doing is white-washing abject failure. They buttress that with an aversion to self-evaluation in a way that guarantees they will repeat that failure again real soon.



So I'm sitting here with a klatsch of people gaslighting each other, and there's an interesting dynamic going on: Their goal is to get me, the editor, to promise to deliver the impossible. Ideally the editor promises them before they demand it. That gives them cover: "You said... you promised... Well if you couldn't deliver, why didn't you speak up in our first meeting?!" So I do speak up, clearly and repeatedly.

They double-double down. I stand my ground. They triple down. If you push too hard they'll accuse you of "thinking negatively" or worse – jinxing the schedule. Eventually I shrug and change the subject.

Ed: "How are we organizing our media? If we're going to get done in 3-4 weeks, it means being supremely organized."

Spreadsheet Felix: "I handle that."

To be fair to Felix, he is among the most responsible, reliable and competent people in the office.

Just one problem... Media is unruly.

The Encyclopedia of How NOT to Produce - Entry #4:

LET MEDIA MANAGE ITSELF

Ed: "We're no longer on Avid. We're on Premiere. There's no central storage system. So we're looking at least two copies of all media: one for editing, one for the producer for viewing."

Spreadsheet Felix: "I'll keep the master backup."

Ed: "So that's a 3rd copy. And we have to make sure the naming conventions and folder hierarchies remain fixed across all copies."

Spreadsheet Felix: "I'll take care of that."

Ed: "Do we have someone logging the media?"

Producer Sharon: "I'll do the logging."

Ed (thinking): "Actual, real, systematic logging or that haphazard grab-bag of hazy observations and half-memories that producers somehow think counts as actual logging?"

Ed (saying): "And since we're pushing interviews up to a transcription service, we're going to need those naming conventions rock solid if we want them to reference files in the edit. That's a 4th copy."

Budget Woman Brenda: "Don't worry about it."

Ed: "So we're clear, the cameras we're using generate same-named files. C0001.MTS, C0002 – we're talking hundreds of duplicate non-descriptive names. That will trip us up when we're trying to put together a script [that you haven't started writing or shooting yet]... If we're going to be done in 3 weeks."

All (chorus): "1 week"

It's **Trainspotting**, and I'm sinking into that Perfect Day mobile grave.

From *The Encyclopedia of How TO Produce*, which is apparently locked away from public knowledge in some safe deposit box in the Iron Bank: "Media can be managed with a great degree of efficiency. Done well, it can unlock creative options, transform your production, while simultaneously saving massive amounts of time and money. You can even break the iron triangle. But only after recognizing the following truth:

Asset management is really important and vexingly difficult."

The equivalent chapter in *The Encyclopedia of How NOT to Produce* has a picture of the meeting we're in. Station Exec Boris: "Look, I need you to not worry about this. We're doing lots of shows here. None of them are having any media problems. You're the only one who thinks this is an issue."

The Encyclopedia of How NOT to Produce - Entry #5:

MAGIC PHRASES VAPORIZE INCONVENIENT TRUTHS

Case in point: "You're the only one having this problem" This is a transparent managerial cop-out, a crutch for producers and execs who who don't understand with any degree of competence the details of the people

and processes they are managing.

Across the office, right in this very moment, another production is in the throes of falling apart because of media management issues. It won't become known for a few weeks, but right now thousands of unruly disorganized media clips are thumbing their noses in our general direction.

Media management occupies a peculiar place in the back of people's mind: on a shelf labelled "Things that will sort themselves out naturally". That shelf tips, leans, cracks, falls apart on a regular basis, but the label stays stubbornly adhered. By the time the consequences explode into full-blown crisis, the cause is forgotten... or conveniently ascribed to things like...

- Assistant editor incompetence
- PAs that need to be let go
- Editors who f**ked up
- Technical problems in the abstract or "It's just the way things are".

But typically it's the result of people in charge, who don't know their field.

Ed: "I'm actually not the only one. This is an issue on every show, everywhere, always, and it's a growing problem."

Producer Sharon: "Well we've never had any problem like that here."

Ed: "Actually, we literally had exactly this problem here, at this station, on the last show I worked on, a show you were working on. And that was on Avid, WITH centralized storage. Remember that interface I built to keep us on schedule? That was a media naming convention problem. It's not a question of whether it's an issue. It's an issue of whether it's taken seriously."

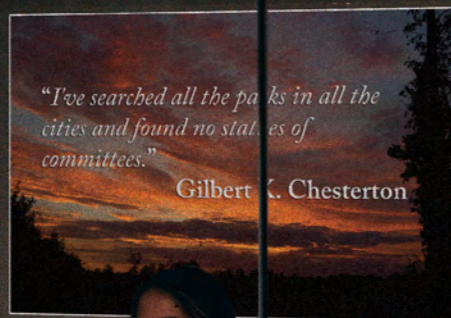
Prod/Exec/Budget woman (in chorus): [Silence]
[Silence]
[Silence]
[Silence]

Station Exec Boris: "I don't know. You're the only one who thinks this is a problem."

Ed: [Silence]

Station Exec Boris: "Think of what we're doing this way: It's like changing the tires on a speeding car while driving down the freeway."

or AKA...



Gilbert C. Chesterton

The Encyclopedia of How NOT to Produce - Entry #6:

THERE IS NO TIME FOR PLANNING

Station Exec Boris: "No, it's like, fixing an airplane while it's flying at 500 miles per hour."

He waited for a response, like a stand-up comic laying a goose egg. I imagine he picked that up in some meeting with other managers where it must have sounded fresh to him, apparently oblivious to the fact both punch lines are redundant and stale.

Whatever form the analogy takes, it's always code for management that can't.

Eventually everyone laughed... out of deference. That changed the subject.

The Encyclopedia of How NOT to Produce - Entry #7:

DOCUMENTARY IS INTRINSICALLY SUPERIOR

Prior to this meeting Station Exec Boris had given me some links to prior shows he'd overseen. I watched them over the next few nights. What they all had in common was an immediately seductive style: narrow depth of focus interviews, well-composed b-roll, and drone shots.

From then it was textbook examples of how to fall for the worst trope traps of PBS programming, where serious-minded signifiers – a slow pace, minimally-edited interviews arranged to maximize dry content, stretches of music-free sequences dotted

with occasional music library selections that are the orchestral equivalent of doldrums – are presumed to add up to serious content. The unstated logic of this approach: "We don't overproduce. We just capture reality." At its worst you get programming barely more substantive than a dating game show, but in a lethargic, joyless style.

One of his exemplary shows, attempting to celebrate the valuable contributions latino immigrants bring to the US, managed to wring the same lifeless concepts from three completely different people: "I love my culture, but I'm not of my culture. I mix my heritage with the country I live in."

To be clear, that's an excellent underlying theme, but show it. Evoke it. Prove it. Don't say it. And if you do say it, don't repeat it ad nauseam. Just because a concept is "true" and "well-intentioned" doesn't make it story-worthy. And followed by a series of shots of standard-issue cooking, it's just verbal garnish over bland breadfill. Spend some time in a Latin American country, or just read some latin american literature and you'll be struck by two things:



1) An expanded sense of the possible in literature that can be life altering.

2) That representing "cultural respect" through monotony, stone-faced stoicism, and humor-free ramblings is an unforgivable insult... not only to Latinos but to everyone.

The most interesting thing about the shows showcased was the various strategies I employed to stay awake while watching them.

The Encyclopedia of How NOT to Produce - Entry #8:

SELF-CONGRATULATORY MEETINGS ARE SUFFICIENT

So I'm sitting there in the follow-up meeting. I want to say something positive about these sample videos, but my list of not-overly-spun, basically honest, positive observations is pretty short: "Pretty good camera

work."

I put a few additional words around that, but basically it boils down to:

a) Narrow depth-of-focus beats flat-lit 1990s-style NTSC interviews, and

b) Drone footage is compelling almost no matter what.

I hold back from the more accurate assessment: "Your shows are uninspired, structureless and largely pointless exercises in tedium that even fork-pried-open eyelids can't defeat."

That more honest assessment does slip out when, after some idle chit-chat I let slip, "Your team did a great job capturing those stories without a whole lot of time to prepare in advance."

Boris does a Church Lady double-take: "We planned these very carefully."

So which is it? Are we're changing the blades of a helicopter mid-flight, or are we planning things ahead so that we don't have to?

There is, in fact, an argument for both, where you plan ahead up to a certain point, and then, before analysis paralysis sets in you get started. There's actually a compelling efficiency strategy to be had there. But ambiguously appealing to "planning as you go", while promising to "plan ahead" while simultaneously not planning anything... that's just a flutter of rubber-band-bound bats.

But it turns out, that was indeed the whole point of this meeting: To self-celebrate a newfound commitment to preparation and higher standards. "This ain't your grandfather's public TV," he suggested. Shows are to be meticulously planned, outlined, even story-boarded! There are even "style sheets"!

We will schedule prep days and a pre-production color session featuring LUTS, and perhaps most important, we are telling stories... narratives... "beginning, middle, and end!"

Welcome to the BFE “DEI” Zone

by
Col Goudie

While you may previously have heard of Diversity, I’m pretty sure a vast majority of you won’t be aware of the more current Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion acronym. This refers to organisational frameworks which seek to promote “the fair treatment and full participation of all people”, particularly groups “who have historically been underrepresented or subject to discrimination” on the basis of identity or disability.

To start the conversation, the first thing I’d ask you to do is to try and reset thoughts you might already have on the subject of DEI. Wanting Inclusion isn’t a new thing. It’s not a woke thing. People have consistently yearned for and indeed deserved Inclusion.

For most of human history inclusion was limited to a minority of the population. Two and a half centuries ago, the lack of it, despite burdensome taxation, sparked a significant event known as the American Revolutionary War. Even working-class men, who as always bore the brunt of such conflicts, continued to be denied the right to vote. Just think about that. You were sent to fight (and die) for your King and country, but you had no say in how your taxes were spent or the laws that were created by those you were fighting for. It wasn’t until 1867 when The Representation of the People Act extended the vote to urban working men meeting a property qualification!

Still this progressive woke change faced opposition from the privileged ruling class, who lamented the perceived upheaval it would bring. Unfortunately, throughout history, whenever a segment of society has aspired to be “included”, those already included, with positions of power, have often questioned the need for change. A pattern that persists to this day. Inclusion has been denied to citizenry not just based on class, but on gender, religious belief, sexuality and neurodivergence.

In the realm of suffrage, women — regardless of social class — had to wait until 1918 to join men in exercising their voting rights, thanks to the new Representation of the People Act. However, full inclusion for women over the age of 21 was only achieved in 1928 fewer than 100 years ago.

Inclusion extends beyond the ballot box; it has a profound influence on how people are perceived and represented in the world. As editors we are storytellers (in the quadrant of producers, directors, writers) shaping the narratives and content that reaches the audiences. In recent years we have all become more aware of the movement to be more Diverse. Unfortunately, the word diversity can trigger defensive reactions from some individuals who question its need. They ask, “Why do we need diversity?” In an ideal world, everyone would be automatically included so such a question would be unnecessary. Personally, I’m all in favour of adding the terms “Inclusion” and Equality for their grammatical clarity and power.

The desire for inclusion is a basic human longing. People yearn to be included in the workforce, in the stories they consume, and in the conversations that shape our collective understanding. In our profession, cultivating a more Diverse, Inclusive and Equal workforce means welcoming voices that bring unique experiences to the table. A slight commentary or ADR rewrite based on such feedback might create a more inclusive viewing experience for our multifaceted audiences.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion brings in experiences of race, disability, gender identity, sexuality and generational knowledge (at BOTH ends of the age spectrum). People just want to be included. In employment, in the stories they see and read, in the conversation. Let’s explore and celebrate the power of Diversity, Inclusion and Equality and let conversations begin...

Col Goudie (They/Them) is a non-binary film editor with over 40 years experience, editing across a whole range of programmes from award winning dramas, feature documentaries, current affairs, shorts, pop promos and musicals to the billion dollar hit **Star Wars-Rogue One**. Their most recent films include **Tetris** and the forthcoming **Argylle** both for MARV films.





problem: a very pesky and persistent bee gets on Trevor's nerves, bringing him to the end of his tether. As you can imagine, destruction ensues, endangering not only Trevor and the luxury house but also jeopardising his future plans with his daughter. This simple concept was brilliantly penned by the screenwriter Will Davies and masterfully directed by BAFTA winning director David Kerr of 'Johnny English' fame. I was brought on to lend my editing hand as an Additional Editor, alongside a seasoned comedy Editor, Mark Davies ('Peep Show', 'Who is America?', and 'Home Sweet Home Alone').

Q: What was it like working on it?

The shoot was over 50 days long, and my job was to test new ideas, offer alternative versions of scenes, and craft temp music, sound, and visual effects.

I used an abundance of sound effects and temp visual effects to try to 'sell' the character that wasn't there yet—a digital bee. Most takes were shot with a puppeteer operating a bee on a stick. When cutting, I often had to create a new version that would serve the story better. The benefit of that was not being tied to shots with 'baked-in' bee movement. It allowed for greater control and, therefore, the possibility of enhancing the comedy. This was eventually taken over by our brilliant VFX editor, Emilio Pittier.

Q: What challenges did you face in the edit?

I had a challenging scene to edit in Chapter 2 where Trevor was trying to find the bee hiding in a lamp shade. Every time he took a step to



TO BEE OR NOT TO BEE

Working on Rowan Atkinson's hit Netflix Show

Interview with Radek Sienski BFE

by

George Warne

With the one-year anniversary of 'Man Vs. Bee' hitting Netflix, we interview Additional Editor Radek Sienski, BFE.

Q: Hi Radek, I hope you're well. Could you tell us a bit about the show and how you came to be involved?

This Netflix comedy series stars our national treasure, Rowan Atkinson, who inhabits a brand new character: a divorced dad, Trevor. He is tasked with house-sitting a luxury mansion to save money to take his daughter on holiday. There is only one





Q: Crafting comedy requires fresh perspective and very fine-tuned instincts. How closely did you work with Rowan Atkinson?

Rowan Atkinson sat with us in the edit during the fine cut. Although an unusual setup, it was a true testament to his dedication to delivering a product that lives up to his name and fame. Despite scoring 90% during initial audience test screenings, we still went back to the drawing board on some scenes, dancing on a tightrope of having to keep up with the VFX schedule and locking the chapters in segments while still improving the jokes where possible.

Q: Did you enjoy working with Rowan Atkinson?



the right, the bee would go to the left to stay out of his line of sight, and vice versa. Originally, there were too many shots, and that muddled the joke. I decided to play it on a single shot where you could see the bee at the top half of the frame reacting to Trevor's movement at the bottom in real time. The clarity helped to sell the joke.

Another ambitious scene was the final destruction of the house in Chapter 9. The challenge I faced was balancing a few elements of the story: Trevor detonating a bee house with his tiny tormentor inside, the house owners returning, the bee escaping, a dog being squished by the falling bee house, and finally the destruction of an E-type Jaguar - all happening at the same time! Again, clarity helped bring out the comedy. We divided the scene into segments, allowing the detonation to play out more fully than originally storyboarded, pushing the house owners' return a bit later, and even crafting an unscripted bit of destruction to the E-type Jaguar (brilliantly suggested by David Kerr) at the end to punctuate the sequence.

Q: Since there is little dialogue, the music plays a massive role in the show. What was the process like?

A big task was finding the right musical identity for the series. We had the esteemed Lorne Balfe on board as a composer; however, due to the largely non-verbal nature of the show, we wanted to try out some ideas as soon as possible. I 'temped' the whole show using various existing soundtracks from popular adventure and comedy films. Often, I used two or three sources to craft a score that would complement a scene, always being mindful that it didn't lead it too much. It definitely allowed me to flex my musical muscles more than usual.

Our Assistant Editor, Timi Kalderak, was fantastic. She helped with the sound design and VFX temping, which in turn freed me up to devote more time to collaborating with Mark Davies to push the comedy to the maximum.

It was an extreme privilege to work with Rowan Atkinson, a comedy genius of global appeal and one of the best performers in the genre. A perfectionist at heart, he made us work hard, and the result speaks for itself. The whole team — David, the director, Mark, and our editorial team — were phenomenal, and I felt privileged to create the show with them! I love working with people who display such dedication because it inspires me to do better each time. I can also soak up their decades-long experience and up my editing game. If you could work with anyone who inspires you, who would it be?

Man vs. Bee is currently streaming on Netflix. It spent three weeks in the Top 10 most-watched shows.





There are films you've seen once and whether you responded well or badly to them, they stay tucked away in the memory with a faint call back a decade on remembering slivers of the plot and who might have been in it. Then there are favourite movies, significant movies that define periods of your life. You've seen them countless times but again, they are fixed in the memory as superb indicators of time and place and the reassuring recollection of their emotional impact. But then there are the outliers, films that you return to as if they were in orbit around your subconscious, films that despite their technical skill or lack thereof and despite what anyone else thinks of them, champion or critic, they are a balm to the soul time and time again. Before I embarrass myself and list my top two, (naturally, I invite you all to let the editor know what yours are and why) I'd just like to set out a few ground rules. These comfort films are private, particular to you alone. I'm not going to count films you enjoy over and over with partners and friends. As my two go-to films to re-watch with my wife are (yes, I know, judge not lest you be judged) **Notting Hill** and **Love, Actually**. For what they set out to do, they succeed wonderfully. I am just very aware how uncool it seems to be at present to like Richard Curtis's optimistic, sentimental takes on matters of the heart.

Of course there are self-contained scenes in films that stand out and can be replayed with a small but exquisite echo of the surprise and joy you had upon first seeing them. Of those, my list isn't endless but to all intents and purposes it may as well be. There's

Nicholson being tried for issuing a 'Code Red' which results in the death of a marine. Tom Cruise is trying to get Nicholson to admit (of all things given its most famous line) 'the truth'. In **A Few Good Men**, this scene never ceases to entertain. There's some satisfaction in the little guy taking down the tough military man and it featured the debut of the off quoted "You can't handle the truth." Listening to Aaron Sorkin's script is the equivalent of watching a complex dance and both stars perform it superbly well. Don't worry, only two more.



Then there's that moment in **The Imitation Game** in the pub when Alan Turing (Benedict Cumberbatch) is being taught what flirting looks like courtesy of his colleague Hugh Alexander (Matthew Goode). Turing hears that a German clerk spells his girlfriend's name as the first five letters of every Enigma coded weather report, instead of random letters as dictated by the Nazi High Office. Turing has an epiphany and dashes back

to his extraordinary cypher cracking machine. The driving strings of Alexandre Desplat's music cue begin as Turing prepares to enter the coded message. The energy and suspense of the sequence is wonderfully conveyed through score, editing and performance. As the machine cogs abruptly crunch to a halt, we lose the cue. The gang reassembles in front of an Enigma machine and Turing laboriously types in the result. What comes back to them is the weather report in perfect German. There is a moment...

Turning gives away the secret of his epiphany and the romantic theme of the film underscores the celebrations, hugs all round except for Cumberbatch and Goode. The others are in awe of Turing's genius (there is no other word for it). Goode subtly nods at Cumberbatch who rewards him with the slightest of smiles. It is a moment in history brilliantly vibrant and expertly presented. Finally, as I did limit myself to three scenes, I'll end with a sentimental one. I wasn't the film's biggest fan and I've only seen it once and have largely forgotten it.



But there is one scene (and it's a musical number) from **The Greatest Showman** that I think is so well performed, danced and sung, that I find it so uplifting, it gets the blood going with the potential of heroic deeds still to come. To fans of the film, you'll need no prompting. To everyone else, when Hugh Jackman (a rather polished musical theatre performer with **Oklahoma** in the cinemas this year to prove this point), realises what's really the most important aspect of his life and sings the number *From Now On...* Well, I'm an emotional mess. And the scene features diversity off the scale. A win-win. I neglected to mention Superman rescuing Lois Lane from a snagged rooftop helicopter. His



"Excuse me," as he soars into the sky always evokes a smile. Ever the gentleman.

So, what are the qualities of one film in my orbit that I can watch time and time again? Great action scenes? Does it provoke a profound emotional response? Is the romance believable and heartfelt? Is the pacing crisp and the running time short and sweet? Well, none of the above actually. This particular film is about two men talking to people trying to get them to speak





truthfully on a subject, an important subject that will affect an entire nation. The film is nothing but conversations, (twenty six if you're counting) face to face, on the telephone, in gardens, on patios and in elevators... "Is there anywhere you don't smoke?" Got it yet? I can watch **All The President's Men** until every single farmyard animal comes home. And I can't figure out why. I came closer to understanding my fascination with this film by reading the BFI Classic on the film by Christian Keathley and Robert B. Ray (see review on page 38) but it must boil down to the gradual but relentless march of justice being employed, the moments of revelation, those quiet, prosaically edited (meant as a compliment) conversations that rarely provide subtext to chew on. The film focusses on the actions of Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein and their dogged pursuit of the truth (and how far that truth would lead) after reporting on a break-in at the Watergate hotel, the seat of the Democratic party's HQ. This is why every political scandal since has the word 'gate' stuck on it so that you know it's a political scandal.



Of course, as noted by Warner Bros. executives in the 70s, who would want to see a detective story when we all know whodunnit? If you're not familiar with this slice of 70s history, you'll get no spoilers from me here. Screenwriter William Goldman, who all but disowned his work on the film after he found out that another version was being concurrently written, had found the all-important structure. The film tried its best, largely succeeding, to present the journey of the two leads as one of sympathetic discovery. Given the complexities



of the true story, the audience had to feel just as lost as the reporters so that the revelations would have real power. My love for this film never gets old.

Another perennial of mine is again at its face, like **All The President's Men**, a procedural. Someone has been murdered, an important man who was going to bring jobs and prosperity to a little town in the deep south of the US. A police sergeant is tasked by his boss to round up anyone suspicious. He brings a man in, a man quietly waiting for a train in the early hours of the morning. The man is taken in and presented to the chief of police who is highly critical of him and demands he tell him why he has so much money in his wallet. It is revealed in a scene of such intensity with both actors inhabiting their roles so believably, that the man arrested is a fellow police officer. The two men are forced to work together to solve the murder. So what's the catch?

This is Sparta, 1967, with all the racist infrastructure still very much in place and the arrested cop is, of course, black. He's highly intelligent, very capable, handsome and smartly dressed. The Chief is the polar opposite of every one of those traits. But they have a job to do. You can't avoid the racism because that's the DNA of **In The Heat of the Night**, Norman Jewison's extraordinary examination of the stupidity and destructiveness of racial hatred set in the middle of a murder investigation.



They are Sidney Poitier's and Rod Steiger's career-defining roles, both startlingly good as Virgil Tibbs and Chief Gillespie respectively. In ordinary Hollywood movies, characters come to like each other, respect each other and bond. On watching **In The Heat of the Night**, you are teased to believe that eventually before you walk out of the cinema, these two characters from worlds of difference, will come together to see the wisdom of the truth etc. But bless them all for having the balls to make Poitier's visit change virtually nothing. In a scene which teases this most successfully, Poitier is being entertained by Steiger. It's just the two men at Steiger's plain home supping beers and throwing back the firewater.

Poitier is aware that he has detected the smallest crack in the police chief's brusque manner after Steiger admits that he doesn't have many friends and no one he entertains at his home. He actually calls Poitier one of the "chosen few". Poitier extends a line towards some sort of mutual respect (this is the point at which most movies hurtle down cliché alley) but Steiger bats his offer back harshly and elicits a sort of anti-Hollywood shock moment. You can see Steiger mentally relaying Poitier's earlier line "No lonelier than you," in his head before he replies. He says, completely destroying the mood, "Now don't get smart, (insensitive racial slur)..." This is a very smart actor playing mentally slower than himself. It's a joy to behold. It's the first double take in thought I've seen on screen. And the Internet Movie Database states that this scene was made up of dialogue improvised by the actors at the time – then we are simply not worthy... Bravo.

All the way through the movie Steiger physically defers to Poitier. He opens doors for him, sits in the backseat of a car to let him ride up front and he even carries his bags for him. It's a wonderful and subtle way of Steiger managing to maintain his overtly racist persona but also show Poitier the respect he knows he deserves being a much better policeman than Steiger for a start. When Steiger does nothing except gawp open mouthed at a confrontation between the plantation owner Endicott and Poitier (the two men slap each

other), we get the revelation that all the while we've been watching the film, seeing Poitier as Virgil Tibbs standing for our own civilisation (from the future, a pluralist paradise, ahem) we were wrong, oh-so very wrong. Poitier, showing some fire wants to bring that 'fat cat' down off his hill. Steiger (again showing us what he's thinking before he announces it) just says "Oh boy, man you're just like the rest of us. Ain't ya?" It's a telling moment and does two things. It drags Poitier down into the dirt where we all play and it also shows a self-awareness in Steiger of his overt racism.



Despite the two leads' superlative work, it's an actress that walks away with the most stunning scene. Lee Grant as the dead man's widow is in Steiger's office but Poitier chooses to be the bearer of bad news. I know 'showy' acting is not necessarily a good thing (less is frequently more) but as a youngster, after I saw this scene, I felt I knew what great acting was and I stand by that today. Grant is absolutely mesmerising. Most of her greatest moments (and this diminishes not one iota of her achievement) are with her back to the camera but you really have to marvel at the scene to believe it. Poitier lends admirable and literal support but it's Grant's moment.

Of extra interest, soon-to-be-director-of-note himself, Hal Ashby, edited **In The Heat of the Night** and there are editorial flourishes that are more marked by their absence. Where are the shots of Lee Grant's reaction to her husband's death? I'll bet they were shot and I'll bet Ashby and director Norman Jewison concluded that the scene played better on Poitier and Grant's extraordinary reaction from behind.

Please let the editor know what your personal go-to movies are, ones that comfort you or disturb you, ones that reassure or question. Cinema is a broad church.





Belgium, 1942

In 1957 I was working as an Assistant Editor on the O.S.S television series with the other added responsibility of researching and securing the many wartime stock shots that were required to service the series. A script called for a Belgium-looking street which showed a roof top skyline and the camera then tilting down to the cobbled street below. I couldn't find the exact shot but I did find something that if the action was optically reversed, it could work. I added a superimposed caption 'Belgium 1942'. Everybody seemed happy with the result, until an Editor friend noticed that at the beginning of the tilt down in the far distance, a puff of smoke could be seen slowly disappearing DOWN a chimney. It's good to have friends: but I got a result and the shot stayed in.

Tales from the Cutting Room

by Howard Lanning

In 1974, I edited the official FIFA World Cup Film and thirty six of the preliminary matches. The World Cup Final and preparation was very well covered, with a crew exceeding more than fifty camera technicians on the day. The coverage of the thirty six preliminary matches was not so good with the cameramen being very thin on the ground and I had to rely heavily on the library of crowd shots that had been filmed on the finals day. One of the thirty six matches gave me a particular problem. I just didn't have enough material to work with but then I had an idea. The team had already played several matches, so I thought I would use some of the action sequences from the previous matches. It worked well and I was well pleased. All the editing at this time had been done on B&W rushes. We did the neg-cut and then viewed the Answer Print.



To my horror, the team were playing in a different coloured strip. It looked like they were changing their shirts every five minutes. For me, it was back to the drawing board. I mentioned that we that used the crowd shots that were filmed for the Final, with the result that many of the same crowd shots were used in all the matches, These were matches being played simultaneously, hundreds of miles apart. Amazing and athletic fans!

PART-TIME PARTNERS

by Alan Miller



TV is facing its biggest challenge since the pandemic. Broadcasters are cancelling commissions, Indies have had to cease production and 45% of TV freelancers are out of work with 75% of freelancers struggling to make ends meet. Freelancers are asking: Is TV a viable, sustainable career choice?

Job Sharing is a practical solution to double the amount of jobs available, allowing more freelancers to stay on their feet. SMTJ call on Broadcasters and Indies to commit to offering at least 50% of all roles as job shares for the next 6 - 12 months.

Companies need to employ sharing at the heart of all their policies... SHARE the full time roles. SHARE the commissions with the indies who need support. We all need the work to continue so that when this crisis is over, your workforce will be ready and waiting. Share the Work, Share the Money, Share the Telly Jobs!

Bectu, Screenskills and Share My Telly Job are trailing a scheme to make part-time working more prevalent in an industry where burn out is all too common. It's a worthy answer to an insistent problem. Screenskills funded an extra day a week on a high end drama edit so two job-sharing editors could do a detailed handover on the Wednesday. Those editors were BFE Board member Lindsey Dillon BFE and her co-editor Rachel Hoult. Both felt the project was very successful and worthwhile, one answer to the sometimes silly hours post-production staff are expected to work as 'normal'. I had access to the rushes of an interview about the project* so am able to briefly quote Lindsey and Rachel's answers to some questions about part-time editing.

Continuity: How do you maintain the director/editor relationship when there are two of you on the same show?

Rachel: We're constantly leaving each other messages. If I have a conversation with the director, I immediately leave a voicemail for the other editor.

Lindsey: The production is getting a lot more for their money with two editors. We're giving them a better quality of work. The end result is massively better than with one editor. Two sets of eyes solve more problems.

Practicality: How do you synchronise your work?

Rachel: We've got this handover on Wednesday. We have that extra day to look at each other's scenes, work through everything.

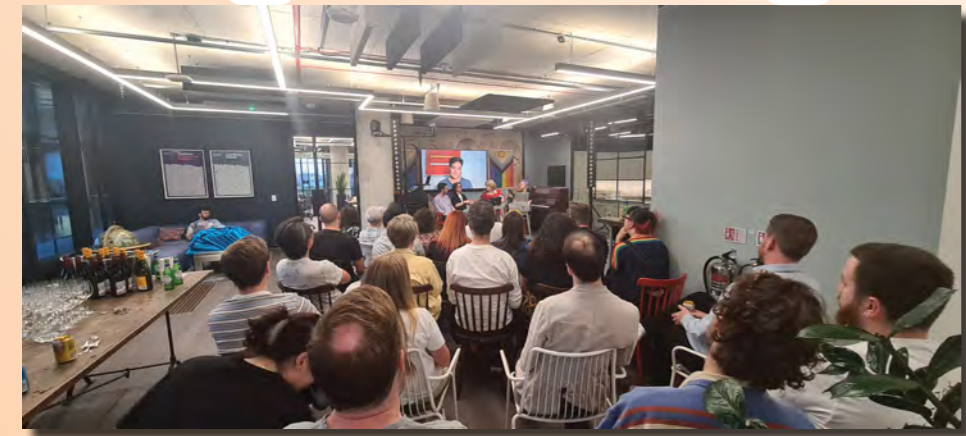
Lindsey: It's those extra hours when we get our heads together and we're bouncing off each other and we're really productive.

Style: With two editors, how would two styles of editing on the same project work?*

Lindsey mentioned this question to me which prompted my article on page 14. I said that the editor brings craft and experience but a style? In short, it's the work that dictates the editorial style together with the input of the director. Editors are there to serve the vision of the director. If, like director Marc Forster, you wanted Quantum of Solace to move at the speed of a bullet, then you get editors Richard Pearson and Matt Chesse to cut the hell out of it which they duly and quite expertly did.

*This interview will be available in September or October. Once it goes live, I'll add it to the BFE Newsletter. It's well worth a look.

**Please see page 14 for my own full response to this question.



STEPPING OUT

BFE PRIDE EVENT

In-Person & Online - Col Goudie BFE chairs a panel discussion on LGBTQIA+ visibility in the edit, with Clara Hardgraves BFE, Ruth Schönege BFE, Cassandra Roberts BFE and Andrew Stannard, UPM - Thursday, 6th July 2023, at Universal Production Music





Porridge the Movie

Editor's Note: Remember the 70s? Many of you will not. Things were said and done differently then. So try if you can, to forgive crass humour and remember that what once was business as usual is now regarded somewhat differently.

I first heard this story from John Schlesinger while working on his film **Sunday, Bloody Sunday**...

A lavatory attendant from 'oop north' comes down to London and is really impressed by the lavatories at Piccadilly Circus Tube Station. "By gum," he exclaims to the cockney attendant "I'm reet amazed at your beautiful convenience. Look at all that fantastic woodwork, the marble, the ceramics, the polished brass, forty cubicles, it's reet wonderful!"

"Ahh," says the attendant, "you might say that but you try workin' 'ere mate, drunks comin' darn throwin' up everywhere, preverts pickin' up fellas, druggies stickin' needles in 'emselves... Every nar an' then someone comes in for a good shit..." (deep appreciative inhale up the nose) "It's like a breath of fresh air!"

Ten years later I'm editing **Porridge** (the movie) and the writers (Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais) had worked the joke into a scene where Fletcher tries to befriend a new inmate and warns him not to hang about in the toilets. Despite a great deal of pressure to deliver the 'shit' punch line, Ronnie Barker absolutely

Tales from the Cutting Room

by Alan Jones

refused, insisting that Fletcher would never say shit. I think everyone knew Ronnie was right and reluctantly the line was changed to "when somebody just sits down and gets on with it...", but the joke wasn't the same without its real pay-off line.



There were two printed takes of the shot (prints were limited as they were expensive) and looking at both I couldn't see any difference between them. I ummed and aahed and decided to use the shorter one. Putting them both in the synchroniser smack together on the first sound mod, I wound them through to the end and amazingly they were identical all the way through! I could have used either sound track with either picture! That was a tribute to Ronnie's extraordinary consistency.

He always knew and delivered his lines perfectly but was kindly tolerant of other actors falling by the wayside.

The prison exteriors and interior wide shots were filmed at HMP Chelmsford while it was being refurbished after a fire. When you see a character walking along a gantry and turning into a cell they are actually moving into Shepperton Studios where all the interior cells and offices were built, (actual cells being a bit small for a camera crew!) it looks seamless and I love the way films manage that. Well done to continuity.

When Fletcher is summoned to Mr Grout's cell, the radio in the background is playing *Desert Island Discs*. Grout says "*Desert Island Discs*, It's always been an ambition of mine to be on that programme". Roy Plomley and Julia Mackenzie came and did a special little recording for that.

Apart from the end title song there is no recorded music in the film, which is pretty unusual. All music is played as if from radios, including the mournful Harry Nilsson's *Without You* and Ian Dury's *Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick* during the opening sequence. The constant background jingles come off ironic radio adds suggesting things like 'Take an away day holiday on National Express Coaches,' ho ho. The Musicians Union complained that musicians hadn't been used and demanded £500 which was paid on the basis it was cheaper to pay than contest, even though scored music wasn't needed.

It was only a couple of weeks after shooting finished that Richard Beckinsale died. He had thought he might die young and had written poems about it. His own character was gentle and kind, very like Lenny Godber's, he was much loved by cast and crew alike. TV episodes of *Porridge* were 'mined' for the odd Godber word or grunt we needed and the appetite to make any more *Porridge* died with him.



Porridge was a wonderful TV series and the cinema version worked well. Central to this was wonderful dialogue. Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais had the hilarious combination of Dick's whimsy being skewered by Ian's barbed put downs. Dick, who directed the film, had been told of the affection that *Porridge* was held in by prison warders and inmates alike for whom it was essential viewing and a lifeline to sanity.

It's hard to believe that it was all nearly 45 years ago and most of the cast have passed on. The film is often part of Christmas listings and never disappoints, it was a huge pleasure to work on.

Alan Jones

TRUTH TO POWER

A REVIEW OF THE BFI FILM CLASSICS OF 'ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN'

BY ROBERT B. RAY AND CHRISTIAN KEATHLEY

Review by Howard Hunt (via the Editor)

In the independent filmmaker's indispensable book, *What They Don't Teach You At Film School: 161 Strategies For Making Your Own Film No Matter What*, number 160, granted a bit late in the list, is 'SACRIFICE ANYTHING TO CLARITY'. It's great advice, something I've tried to stick to throughout my career. Up until reading this BFI Classic I thought that this was a hard and fast rule. If you are not telling your story in a manner an audience can understand then you are making the film for one person, yourself and that by definition is self-indulgence. Yes, you can be arty or obscure or deliberately difficult to understand if that is what you want but you have to be aware, you may lose some of your audience for the luxury of presenting something impenetrable. Or you may make *Eraserhead* and go on to have a brilliant career! You have to love filmmaking.

But, the only mainstream film I know that has jettisoned this hard and fast rule of having maximum clarity is Robert Redford's and Alan J. Pakula's *All The President's Men*. I know of no other film with a double authorship credit. Redford produced the film and ceded authority to Pakula on set because there can be only one captain of the ship. But it is billed as 'A Robert Redford - Alan J. Pakula Film', a first in my experience. As I said earlier on page 29, this is one of very few movies that I can re-watch and still get great pleasure from time after time. Thanks to Christian Keathley and Robert B. Ray's BFI Classic on the movie, I now have a handle on why the film has such an effect on me. Knowing there's a



For an overview of just how momentous the Watergate story really was, read the first paragraph of its Wikipedia page...

spell doesn't necessarily break it. I mean as an audience we are complicit with the filmmaker in ignoring the fact that we are watching action staged for the benefit of a recording device. We know it's all fake so how do we, how can we emotionally invest? That's up to the skill of the filmmaker. So how do you make a film, essentially a detective story, when your audience knows whodunit and how after two years of front page media coverage. This was Warner Bros.' first argument to Redford for not making the Redford produced, black and white, low budget, unknown cast version of reporters Woodward and Bernstein's bestseller. Redford was possibly the hottest actor in the early seventies so a compromise was reached. If Redford starred in it, Warners would acquiesce and get behind a big budget version of the story.

So how to go about it? The brilliance of the filmmakers' solution, now evident to me from reading this book, was to deliberately make unclear certain aspects of the story. Why? Because they felt if the movie was going to work, the audience needed to get invested in the two reporters so everything must be told from their perspective. So if the audience is befuddled and cannot tell its Colsons and Porters from its Halde-mans and MacGruders at certain times, it's OK, because our heroes are as much in the dark as the audience. Let them slowly provide the light. Redford suggested this approach to the reporters writing the book as the whole story was so dense and complex, having two hours to tell it on film was going to be impossible but spending two

hours in the company of the two men who uncovered it small piece by small piece, well that's a different story. I quote:

"...the movie would simulate the reporters' experience of complexity, confusion and illegibility. "We have all these pieces," says Woodward to Deep Throat; "we just can't seem to figure out what the puzzle is supposed to look like." The viewer would be put through the same bewilderment."

And that bewilderment is part of the spell the movie weaves over you. Even ardent watchers of the film find it difficult to work out the simple geometry of the principal set, the newsroom. Keathley and Ray remind us that this was also part of the grand design. Kudos too to the screenwriter William Goldman. Despite winning an Oscar for his work on *ATPM*, he felt Redford betrayed him knowing that original reporter Carl Bernstein and his partner at the time Nora Ephron were working in parallel on another screenplay of the material. In fact he says in his memoir, that if there were anything to change in his life in movies, "I wouldn't have come near *All The President's Men*." It was Goldman who came up with Deep Throat's phrase "Follow the money..." And his original screenplay finishes the film on one huge set-back leaving a good half of the book out of the script. The audience knows how the rest of the story went. But the end is still thrilling even if we do know the broad strokes of the events in question.



The book also shows its appreciation for the acting talent on display. It rightly (in my view) identifies Robert Redford's finest screen acting scene as the uninterrupted six minute take of him juggling important phone calls at his desk. You'll know the shot if you've seen the film. The camera moves in almost slower than the eye can see and it's that move that provides the clue that what we are watching is significant. Redford fluffs his lines and recovers so naturally he makes it look like it was scripted. Yes, he was a bona fide star cast for his looks and ease in front of camera but the man could



act and in *ATPM* he is astonishingly natural. That takes great skill. The other knockout performance in amongst a host of them in this one film, is Jane Alexander as the scared bookkeeper who knows the dirt and has been threatened. For the look she gives her flatmate as she offers the intrusive Bernstein coffee, I would have given her the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress right there and then. She lost out to Beatrice Straight's superb spurned wife's role in just the one appearance in *Network* lasting two seconds over five minutes. I'm not denigrating her win or her performance but five minutes is a mite short for a 'supporting actor' nod. If casting is fifty per cent of filmmaking then this film is a terrific example. Jason Robards as the Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee got the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor.

Finally I want to keep being surprised by the lengths filmmakers go to achieving some kind of authenticity in front of the camera. It's fair to say that set dressers and art directors are an uncelebrated group of hugely important technicians and craftspeople. But get this. The trash (hey, American movie, American terminology) in the trash baskets in the newsroom is actual *Washington Post* trash taken from the real location. I just adore details like that.

If you are a fan of *All The President's Men*, then this BFI Classic will make you adore it even more with details and analysis that surprise and delight on every page.



IGNORANCE IS THIS

HOW CAN WE PROMOTE THE ART AND CRAFT OF
EDITING WHEN EVEN THOSE WHO EMPLOY US
RARELY KNOW EXACTLY WHAT WE DO?

EDITED BY CHRIS ROSSPASS

A transcript of a private conversation clandestinely recorded in the early 1980s between a nascent independent film producer (A. 'Alex' Corden) and an equally promising independent film director (C. 'Charlie' Small) came to light recently that cracked open issues that up until then had remained unspoken and only privately addressed. Names have been changed to protect the oblivious. The Editor is thankful to another anonymous source for providing access to the tape.

click- *Up-market restaurant sounds in the background.*

AC: ...lobster here, you're in for a treat.

CS: I'm really not the one to wine and dine. Is there some thing I need to be drunk to hear? Is there a problem?

AC: No problem. I just need to be frank and then I need you to educate me.

CS: (calls) Excuse me, two triple vodkas, ice, fifty-fifty tonic, please. (to AC) What about you?

AC: Seriously, just a chat. But a bottle of Chablis should work, thank you.

CS: Do I need buttering up or do you want to dive right in?

AC: Save the butter for the lobster. OK. So we have a watertight script. There's not one insider or outsider who's read it and not been thrilled by it, right?

CS: Do we have a script problem?

AC: No.

CS: Go on.

AC: So I get the best director to shoot the script. Christ, we even have storyboards so we know ninety per cent how you intend to shoot it. I mean there it is on the page and in comic form.

CS: You're going to quote Alfred...

AC: (*interrupting*) Hitchcock says the film is made in his head. He shoots what's necessary and the editor basically cuts out the flash frames*, and you have a movie.

CS: It's not quite that simple. Your question is?

AC: What the hell else does an editor do except cut out the flash frames and follow the script? Why do I pay an editor for months on end before the film is ready?

CS: How long have you got?

AC: Look, I have two or three movies behind me and one of those is actually quite good but each time, the editing has lasted months. Months! How does it take months? Why does it take months to read the script, snip out the flash frames and place one bit of celluloid next to another until you have your film? It just seems so basic to me. I mean there's a script, a storyboard. What more does an editor need, cheerleaders?



CS: OK, let's say you have what we have; a great script, a director who knows what they're doing and a twice BAFTA nominated editor. We also have a working time machine. Just before we shoot a frame, we go forward in time, check the movie will be a hit – naturally – and then go back to its locked screening before distribution and take lots of notes. So I direct only what I need to and our editor makes exactly the film that we know will be a success and we've saved a boatload of money on locations we don't need to go to, actors we don't need to hire, and a post schedule cut down to a quarter.



AC.: Sounds terrific!

CS: We don't have a time machine.

AC: Right, yeah.

CS: The creative process demands we find our way to the movie by taking many wrong turns that only light up as wrong turns by the complex process of editing. "Cutting out the dull bits," which is another Hitchcock nugget of wisdom is like saying a Mozart symphony is just notes and in some cases too many notes. You've seen **Amadeus**?

AC: Well. There it is.

CS.: Cute. Cutting out the dull bits is wildly inapplicable. There's a very good reason that one day actors will publicly thank their editors, architects of their performances together with the director.** An editor's work is a very complex process to break down.

AC: Anything complex can be broken down into simple parts. I mean, for Christ's sake, film editing is not rocket science. Give me the bullet points.

CS: You're serious?

AC: When have you and I shared a frivolous moment?

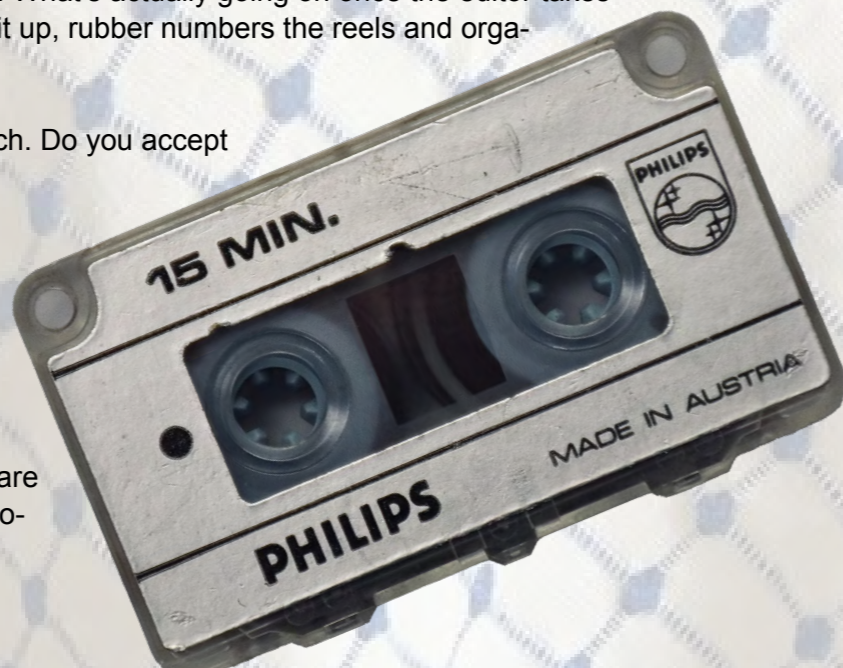
CS: On that cover set in '74 when you said you could smell...

AC: Yeah, OK. No really, shoot. Start at the top. What's actually going on once the editor takes delivery of the rushes, the assistant syncs it up, rubber numbers the reels and organises the cans on the shelves. Go.

CS: Colour me shocked that you know that much. Do you accept every film is a prototype?

AC: Constructed in a fashion all too well known and one we're well used to by now. Yeah, OK a prototype, but the wheel is very much invented already.

CS: Yes, but my point is that editors make scenes work according to how the scenes are not working, scenes different for every prototype.



AC: Whoah. What does 'working' mean in that context?

CS: Unusually perceptive question. Let me fudge the answer... 'Working,' means a scene in a film that the majority of those with the creative power to change it don't want to. It includes its effectiveness at prompting and eliciting emotion and how well, structurally, it fits with what came before and what comes after. I thought you wanted bullet points.

AC: Name a 'working' scene I can imagine.

CS: Well, every scene in every movie works in the context of 'that's the cut filmmakers let out into the world.' But OK, a couple of years ago, a middle aged man with a baseball cap walks slowly around what looks like a factory. It takes him many minutes to find what he's looking for and he takes his sweet time.

AC: Sounds boring as hell. This 'worked', did it?

CS: It was the editor's very first assembly and no one touched a frame of it once it was cut.

AC: What did he find, the Holy Grail?

CS: No. A cat called Jones and then seconds later a man-sized bio-mechanical alien put a hole the size of a tangerine in his head with its retractable jaw and whisked him up in the air...

AC: (*a beat*) That's not fair.

CS: No, it's not. It's editing. I neglected to mention the glorious suspense cue, the cat's performance and the shadowy location but without those minutes of build-up and suspense, the attack and death are utterly meaningless. That's editing.

AC: So, set-up important for punchlines to work. Got it.

CS: You also have to know that moments before this scene was one of the greatest 'scare' sequences in cinema history. What the crew called the "dildo on a skateboard" scene. So the audience were already royally primed for some alien action so you have to take that into consideration and play your audience accordingly. you've scared the hell out of them and now everyone in the cinema is on to you. They are expecting more horror and you have to dish it out sparingly or lose your audience. They must be at your shoulder at all times.

AC: At your...

CS: The editor has to be an audience almost all the time.



CS: They shouldn't care about anything as much as they need to care about the audience. The best answer to a narrative question is the one that's answered the split second the audience asks it or the split second before. Or if suspense is the goal, you leave a question hanging until you are prepared to answer it at the most dramatic moment.

AC: So you as a director know all this. That begs the question. Why do you need editors?

CS: Every good director knows how to edit. How would they know what to shoot and how to shoot a scene? Apart from the physical demands of both jobs which would exhaust most director/editors, there's a very good reason, a very important reason for hiring a good editor. It's another torch beam in the dark, another creative mind brought in to allow the director room to manoeuvre. If you assemble according to a screenplay, you're taking a motorway to the city when going via the back roads may yield a more interesting trip... the road less travelled, so to speak.

AC: So why do we deify directors?

CS: We don't. You do. Marketing does. The press do. With the exception of Alfred Hitchcock, it's only since **Jaws** and **Star Wars** that a director has become almost as much a lure to an audience as a movie star. The reality of the situation is that no one cares who cooks the food. They only care how it tastes. In the early days, directors were guns for hire, not stars. Only cineastes cared who directed what. And you don't pack cinemas with just film nuts. But the fish movie and the goodies and baddies in space redefined what profit could be and someone has got to be responsible for that so why not the guy in charge?

AC: So editors are a director's secret weapon?

CS: In a way. Probably the most lauded of directors put it succinctly – and he had prestige by the bucket load to lose by saying it.

AC: I'm all ears.

CS: Orson Welles, bless him, said "The notion of directing a film is the invention of critics - the whole eloquence of cinema is achieved in the editing room."

AC: So why don't we celebrate editors more?

CS: Because for the best reasons, and reasons editors I've worked with are quite happy with, it's in their interests to be this background figure who collaborates with the director in making the best film the material can support. As to who's responsible for certain decisions, that's a mug's game trying to assign specific credit. But some editors I've worked with just love the work so much. They love taking care of



the nuance, the subtext, the fine detail. I'm a creative partner of course but having a good editor next to you in a cutting room is like having two of you doing a very physical job. It's much easier and it can be, with the right editor, immense fun. And don't forget the editor rarely gets credit for anything beyond the cut. That's one of the upsides of being a director. Sure, a lot of them like to work on the footage on their own just with the assistants. It's a very physical job though you might dispute that. And developed film has that unique scent. Editors get very romantic about that.

AC: As a producer I don't get involved unless directors invite me in and ask for my opinion.

CS: That's why we're still working together. You are not the typical producer!

A waiter is heard indistinctly asking for their order.

AD: A bottle of the Chablis, ice in a separate glass and the Greek Salad as a main please.

CS: I'll just have the one glass. I get sleepy if I drink in the afternoon. The Caesar Salad for me. And can you add a garlic bruschetta?

The waiter indistinctly confirms.

CS: Thank you.

AD: So give me an example of nuance in a cut?

CS: (exhales) Uuuh... Did you see **The Offence**?

AC: Connery playing against type?

CS: That's the one.

AC: Didn't do too well if I remember right.

CS: There is an extraordinary moment in a scene which is made by the editor choosing *not to cut*. Was that his decision or did the director Sidney Lumet stay his blade? We'll never know. Connery plays a police detective tortured by the horrors of the job and is cracking under the pressure. When he finds the young girl,



a potential victim cowering in the woods, he places his enormous sheepskin jacket over her and looks down just before he picks her up and carries her off to safety.

AC: The White Knight?

CS: Not quite. There's a shot of Connery looking down on this fragile and vulnerable girl and it lasts far longer than necessary. In those few seconds, we concentrate on Connery and start to see what's going through his mind. James Bond melts in front of our eyes replaced by a potential Ian Brady***, a damaged, dangerous man. It's a chilling scene made so much more effective by a shot held a little longer than comfortable. That's great editing.

AC: Yeah, I can see how that works. Ever held eye contact with a stranger for longer than a few seconds?

CS: Shall we try that with the waiter?

AC: So from a director's perspective, and I can't believe I've never asked you this before, what's my job?

CS: Apart from getting the budget together?

AC: Ah, that's nuts and bolts. I want to be more connected to the creative side. Inspire me.

CS: Producers are creative but I like to think of producers - selfishly, granted - as prizefighters protecting poets. Is that pretentious?

AC: An excess of alliteration perhaps... All film directors are pretentious, even you! I mean we have enough stacked against us in this industry not to at least try our best to be artistic. Do you know how many of us are producing, let alone directing in this business?

CS: It's changing. Not exactly at light speed but it is changing. Just an aside but the first director in film history to shoot an honest to goodness narrative film was a woman, Alice something. She was French. She wanted to prove it could actually work.

AC: What was the movie?

CS: Something about a cabbage. This was before Méliès.

AC: I heard most editors were women in the early years. Studio heads likened it to knitting

CS: Yeah, we missed a trick not holding on to our needles way back then. Men didn't know what they were missing.



The Very First Movie Director, Alice Guy-Blaché.

AC: Actually they worked that out pretty quickly and shuffled us off to the lab cutting neg.

CS: Storytelling is too satisfying a business not to crawl over broken glass to be a part of.

AC: Amen to that. Speaking of glass.

CS: A toast. To glass ceilings.

AC: And to laughing maniacally as we shatter them. To us...

-click- after the chink of glasses.



Editor's Note: As I'm sure a lot of you have already realised, I pulled a Coen Brothers trick and stated up front that this was a genuine 80's recording. All of the above is, of course, complete fiction but the issues raised are all too real. I wanted a way to bring them out into the open that might clarify a few things about our craft that are not that well understood, some of them not even by us ourselves. Hope you're not all mad at me...

*As film starts up and slows to a stop in the gate, it creates overexposed frames known as 'flash frames' which indicate the beginning and the end of each time the camera starts and stops.

Many thanks to Lupita N'yongo who did just that in accepting her supporting actor Oscar win in 2014. Needless to say, **12 Years A Slave was edited by Joe Walker.

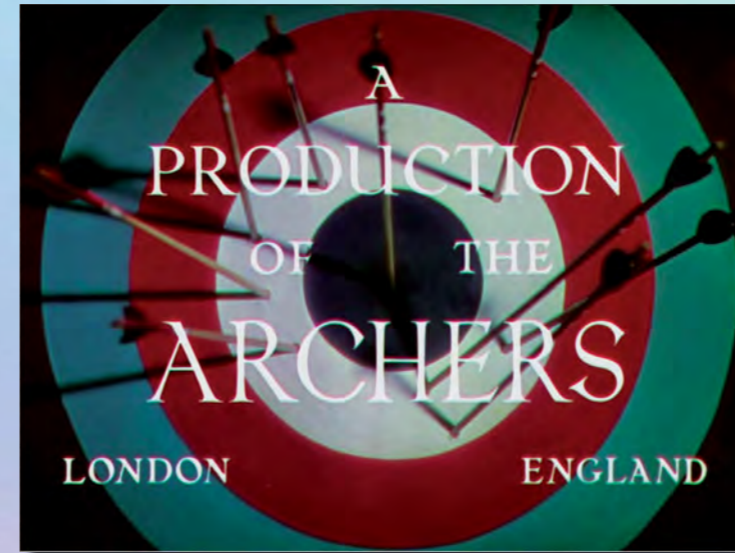
***Ian Brady was one half of the infamous 'Moors Murderers'. Together with Myra Hindley, they sexually assaulted and murdered five children burying them on the moors outside of Manchester between 1963 and 65.

DEAD GIVEAWAY

There's So Much To Learn For Free
From The Very Best of The Past - Vol. II

by Willy Bilder

Editor's Note: Mr. Bilder is well aware that the editor underlined the importance of older films in the last issue and mentioned black and white work in particular as a plea for younger members not to be put off by monochrome as there was so much to learn from master filmmakers. So in the spirit of playful rebellion, he decided to pick four of the greatest films ever made (a lot of people may agree with him) which were released in 1943, 1946, 1947 and 1948. So they certainly qualify as 'old' films but black and white? Folks, let me introduce you to what passed for IMAX in the day, the extraordinary celluloid medium of three-strip technicolor. Colours pop out at you with a vivacity and vividness that is exhilarating. In fact colour almost becomes another character in each film. These four films originated from the greatest filmmaking partnership outside (or even inside) of Hollywood, 'the Archers' aka Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger... If you have not seen these films, you have treats to savour...

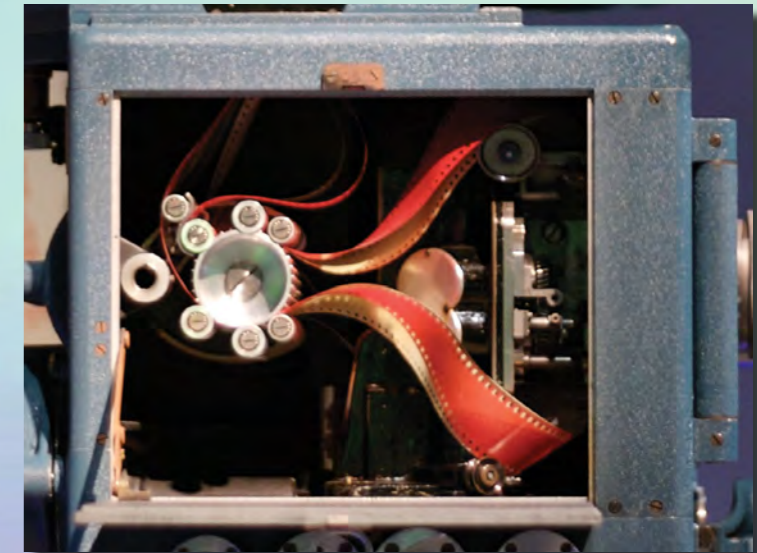


On Target

An Introduction to The Archers

Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger were simply a match made in Heaven. While their partnership was credited unusually as 'Written, Produced and Directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger', the division of crafts was usually Pressburger as the writer and producer while directing was Powell's strength. Distinctly un-British in sensibility when it came to their craft and style, their films are instantly identifiable, gorgeous to look at with a richness, depth and playfulness that traditional British cinema in the same period often failed to capture with as much creative zeal.

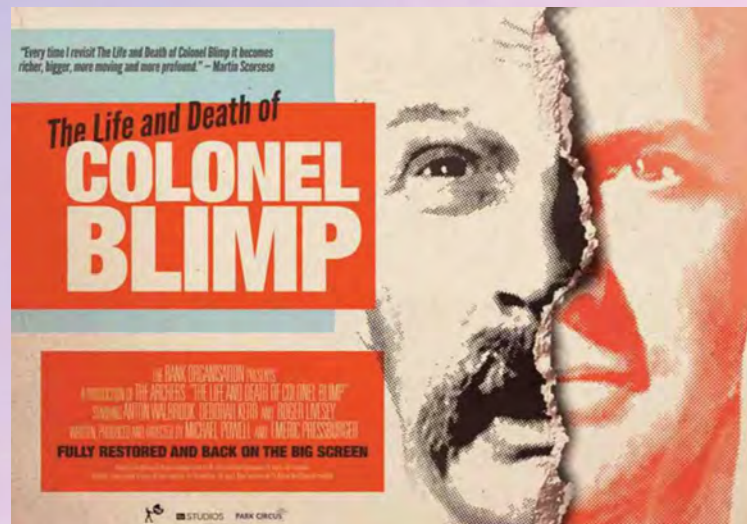
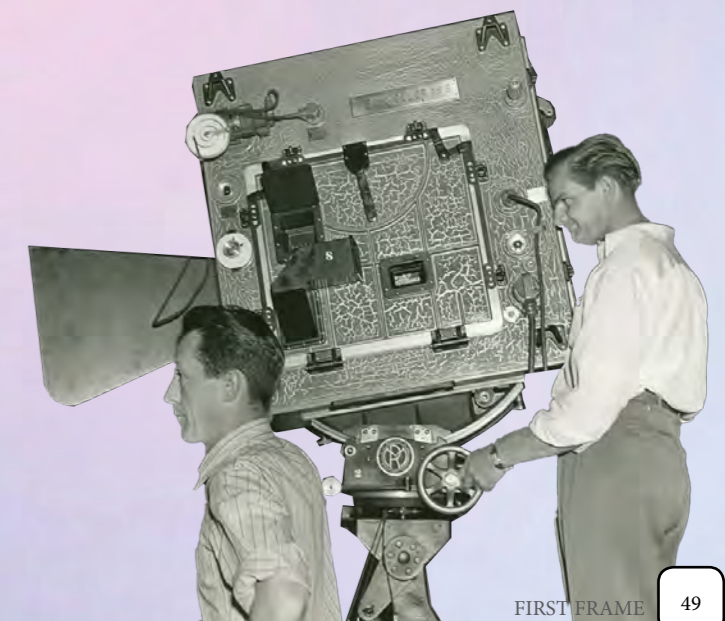
And the films' themes were not inconsequential, their character studies profound. **Colonel Blimp** was originally a newspaper cartoon character lampooning the old British colonial values. What the Archers do with this man's life story is reflect how change and unrequited love can buffet a man's path. It's quietly moving and shows how friendships can transcend national boundaries. **A Matter of Life and Death**, Powell's favourite of all of his films, is a delightful fantasy about an World War II airman who should have died but Heaven missed him in the fog... **Black Narcissus** examines what happens when by choice women are obligated to deny their own natures. Set in a nunnery in India, two women clash over one's sexual awakening. Probably the most famous of the Archers' films, **The Red Shoes** is a story about a ballerina who's desire to dance is as important to her as her own life. She has to make terrible choices between duty, love or her passion while being managed by a suave Svengali in the background. All four are seen today as classics.



Enchantment

What is 3-Strip Technicolor?

Two strips of 35 mm black and white film negative, one sensitive to blue light and the other to red light, ran together through an aperture behind a magenta filter, which allowed blue and red light to pass through. A third film strip of black and white film negative ran through a separate aperture, behind a green filter. The two apertures were positioned at 90 degrees to each other, and a gold-flecked mirror positioned at 45 degrees behind the lens allowed a third of the incoming light to go directly through to the green-filtered aperture, and reflected the remaining light to the magenta-filtered aperture. Because of this division of light between three film strips, Technicolor photography required much more lighting than black and white photography. The camera is seen here with its sound-proofing "blimp" cover, which doubled its size. So adorned, it earned its nickname of 'The Enchanted Cottage' coined by Michael Powell himself.



1943



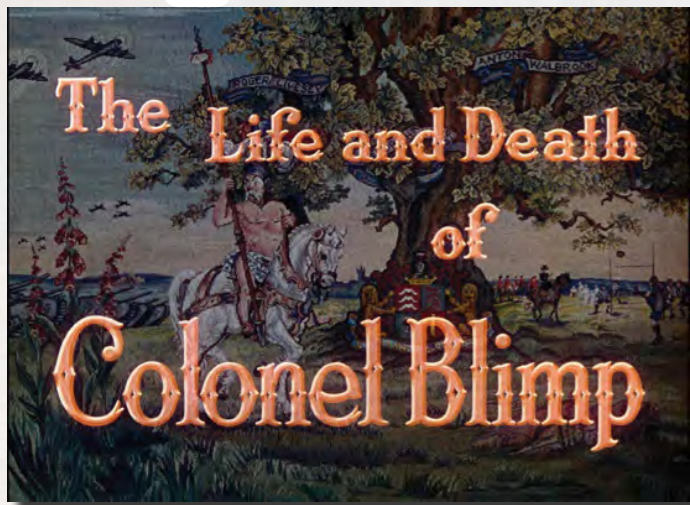
1946



1947



1948



Soldiering On

A Review of The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp

If I was lucky enough to have met Michael Powell and hear first hand that his favourite Archers movie was **A Matter of Life and Death**, and confirmation of his creative partner's choice, **The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp**. It's not a surprising choice given that Pressburger was an enthusiastic anglophile.

The film's character whose life parallels the leading man's, the German character (Theo Kretschmar-Schuldorff played by the incomparable Anton Walbrook) is welcomed into the UK in the middle of the Second World War despite his soldiering against the UK throughout his long career. Pressburger must have revelled in writing this extraordinarily moving scene (Theo's wife had died and his children became Nazis so with nothing in Germany to keep him there, he sought refuge in the UK). You wonder if Pressburger was taken into to his beloved country in the same manner as his fictitious German character.



The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp is a movie that encompasses many huge themes and is a work that is not only ahead of its time, its panache and élan is markedly ahead of many film-making styles even being practised now, over eighty years later. In fact, looking at the broader picture, **Blimp** is to modern cinema, as General Wynne-Candy (Blimp's movie identity) is to the whippersnapper soldiers who regard the old guard as old codgers, out of touch OAPs who have nothing more to offer. The fact that **Blimp** is actually about many important themes and modern cinema is about lightning flashes which very occasionally strike and illuminate a subject of weight almost by accident, is another aspect that underlines **Blimp** as a profound treatise on being human.

The original cartoon character of Colonel Blimp was created by David Low in the late 1800s. He was an intractable, stuck-in-his-ways old soldier who actively discouraged anything 'new fangled'. He represented a long since gone 'old guard', something decidedly unflattering to the Empire's powers-that-were. The movie's Colonel Blimp is many cavalry charges away from two dimensional. Roger Livesey's portrayal is touching, gallant and full of unresolved longing. He's the sort of soldier even a pacifist would admire with eminently admirable traits. You could read Blimp as England personified, but a romanticised England. His is the stiff upper lip that twitches at wrongs and strives to right them. He only ever trips up when a certain subtle emotional



response is required when it is clearly so far off his radar, it may as well be in geostationary orbit around Pluto. Wynne-Candy (Clive to you and me) is an emotional baby. He knows absolute right from wrong and was brave enough in the Boer war to earn a Victoria Cross but give him a woman and he wouldn't know whether to pat it on the head or throw a stick for her... Now this isn't to be derogative. It's just that England Expects... men not to know how to be with women...



People grow old. They have opinions. Sometimes those opinions change. Sometimes they don't. Being a German doesn't make anyone a Nazi. Friendships between individuals can flourish while their countries try to annihilate each other. Youngsters cannot imagine what it is like to be encased in an older body whereas the sadness is that the reverse is never true. Colonel Clive Wynne-Candy is an old soldier lounging in a steam bath. He is assaulted by brash, impudent soldiers who have deliberately taken the directive that 'war starts at midnight' and decided to play as dirty as the enemy they are fighting. Nazis would not observe rules so these men assume that's the way to win a war against Nazis (I have to admit, the logic works for me).

Within ten minutes of screen time, the young commander is standing in front of the old Clive as he sweats, making fun of the heavier, older man. Big mistake. In one of the cinema's smartest flashback transitions (in one take, mind you), the older Clive dives in to the pool to beat some sense into the young commander and as the camera passes over the pool, we see the young, dashing Clive step out the other end. It's now 1902. It's one of those shots that makes you link the term film-maker with artist with no hesitation. Clive Candy is vibrant and brash with youthful vigour (Livesey was 37 at the time and straddles the demands of a role that take him from his late twenties to his early sixties with great aplomb). I am also thrilled to mention that Roger Livesey – like myself – was a Welshman born not far from where I was, in Barry, South Wales. That accent is very far from Welsh.... We learn quickly that Clive Wynne-Candy has a strong sense of morality and has already won a Victoria Cross. To maintain a positive spin on how England is perceived, Clive travels to Berlin to help an English teacher, Edith, to staunch damaging propaganda.

After a wonderful scene in a Berlin restaurant, Candy gets himself into a duel with a fellow soldier fighting to satisfy the German Army's honour. Recovering from their wounds, the German, Theo, and Clive become firm friends and Theo and Edith fall in love. It's in these scenes where the unfussy Roger Livesey comes into his own (aided by a superb screenplay of course). Theo asks for a second duel believing that Clive and Edith are romantically linked. He has fallen in love with her and Clive, in shock, stands on his bed and looks down at his friend. "You're cuckoo!" he says (this in itself is a terrific reverse as it's really Clive who's the cuckoo, or cuckold because he really is in love with Edith too but he's too bloody English to know it yet. Livesey's acting here is ex-



emplary). But then he breaks into a grin, steps off the bed and warmly congratulates his friend. He seems to be OK until he moves in to kiss Edith. As he moves away we see that Clive knows he has just kissed goodbye any chance of romantic fulfilment. He is utterly in love, and he's just given away his sweetheart to his best friend. His sense of self-deception locks in, but he cannot get Edith out of his mind, and throughout the next forty years, he finds women who resemble Edith a great deal (casting wise, this is not surprising as they are all played with a prim undercurrent of refined sexuality by Deborah Kerr). When Clive learns that Theo's been taken prisoner, he performs a lovely bit of what actors call 'business'. "Poor old Theo," he says, and he strokes underneath his moustache which of course was grown to hide his huge scar from a clean cut given to him by Theo. It's subtle but it's tremendously affecting.

Pressburger may have reminded Powell that cinema is not words but repeated exposure to **Blimp** means that words that may have sailed over your head at a first viewing now make your jaw drop with the humour, the signposting and the love of the language. Two examples of this; the best friends have had their duel and both been handsomely cut by each other's swords. They are nursed by the woman with whom Clive falls in love, but who eventually leaves in love with Theo. Convalescence is dull so the friends play Bridge endlessly. At the start of their games, Candy shuffles the cards and says (and it still makes me smile with the brilliance of it) "Cut for partners?" Sublime. Secondly, with the use of three words five minutes apart, Pressburger demonstrates the art of economy, a screenwriter's principal weapon. In the middle of the First World War, Clive, still in love with Edith, is offered macaroni. "Beastly stuff!" he comments preferring to visit the local convent to find better food. Minutes inside the convent, Clive encounters the woman he will marry, a nurse the spitting image of Edith. He is then offered macaroni again and Clive offhandedly says "Splendid!" That's how to write screenplays, folks.



These are merely two instances that convince me even more that Pressburger's skill as a screenwriter was off the chart. He seemed to know what Powell could do with his words, how those elusive emotional attachments could form. It's a creative form of prescience because most film-makers have no clue what emotional effect their film is going to have on an audience, but Pressburger's command of his words and faith in a director so suited to his partnership seems to grasp what's possible. At the end of the film, Clive acknowledges that new methods of warfare are necessary after being caught with his trousers down in a war game, one which neatly bookends *Blimp*. He is distraught at his uselessness but then with wisdom, he swallows his pride and agrees to invite the young impudent soldier to dinner. There is a wonderfully moving but simple pan from Clive's driver 'Johnny' (another Edith clone) to Theo and to Clive, who finally accepts the new world in with a resounding salute. How this could be moving eliciting real warmth from this particular audience I will never know. But *The Archers* do. And it's a consistently revealing joy to experience.



One trivial aside: Clive Candy heads the Home Guard at the end of **Blimp** and his batman and housekeeper is played by John Laurie. Shortly before the Blitz, Laurie announces he has joined the Home Guard. It's a lovely nod to the actor (more prescience by Emeric & Mickey?) as Laurie goes on to become famous as Private Fraser the home guard undertaker in *Dads' Army*.



Squadron Leader Peter Carter is moments away from death. He is aboard a stricken WW2 Lancaster bomber on fire, plunging towards the English coastline. All his crew is dead. He has torn ribbons for a parachute. All he can do is jump (rather than "...than fry,"). Before he abandons ship, an American service girl, June, talks with him via radio. In the briefest of movie moments, I fell in love with this couple and had a tear in my eye as June desperately tries to find another way for Peter to escape death. The exchange that always floors me (as it did just now) finishes with June's words "I could love a man like you." Wow. What power the simple close up, actors who convince and writing that is heaven sent. There is no greater honesty than the kind delivered by those who know they're on their way out and in this instance, that honesty turned into an aching, emerging love despite the facts that (a) the couple had never met, (b) to the fated couple there were to be no happy endings and (c) it seems that the powers that be are sticklers for the rule of law.

Heaven (referred to only once by name by Richard Attenborough as a young dead airman surveying an infinite celestial civil service) is a sumptuous black and white bureaucracy managed exclusively by women (angels?) who seem to busy themselves measuring backs for the wings that seem to be the other world's standard issue. Could this be an early example of talented film-making men instinctively knowing that if the women were in charge, it's really our only hope, our only chance of Heaven? But, what ho! Peter's not turned up. His conductor to the after life, an outrageously overblown French aristocrat who lost his head, (played by Marius Goring) missed him in the fog on the night in question. He must go back down to Earth and bring Peter back.

Peter wakes up on a beach and bemused but thoroughly of the opinion that he is in the next world, he tries to report in. 'Keep Out' reads the first sign of sense and in a bold and original mise-en-scene, Powell has Peter's first human contact, a naked goat herder playing a whistle, an image that could be mistaken for Elysium purity and innocence.

Heaven Meant

A Review of *A Matter of Life and Death*





It says a lot about our society (none of it good) that no film-maker would be allowed to shoot this scene today. In an astonishingly timed shot (come on, this was 1947. Primitive computers used punch cards and what we have in our pockets today could only fit in warehouses), a bomber screams overhead as Peter realises he's alive and in love. He now has to take on the powers that be for the right to continue living and loving.

The movie is crammed full of memorable characters, wry humour and three central performances that would have given wings to a concrete mixer. Niven is perfect as the handsome hero with a keen but disturbed mind. Probably better known as Zira in the **Planet of the Apes** series of the 60s and 70s, Kim Hunter plays June with lusty and affecting concern. Her friend Dr. Reeves (played by the P & P regular, he of the honey voice, the utterly marvellous Roger Livesey) fights for Peter's life in this world and the next. The movie also asks the big 'what if' question. It busies itself with spiritual matters, with Peter (a published poet) fully supportive of the idea of surviving human consciousness after death. The fantasy aspects of **AMOLAD** (P & P's movies have some fun acronyms. Try **I Know Where I'm Going!** or **IKWIG**) are consistent with the basic tenets of Christian belief and the film puts love above all earthly or heavenly concerns which is as good a message as any. Love frustrates the bureaucrats up there and down here – it's more a matter of love or death but petty human traits and national prejudices also surface, those determined to drag Peter up the **Stairway To Heaven** (the US title) by hook or literal crook.



The staging of Peter's hallucinations are notable by their simple but very effective special effects. As I said, this was 77 years ago but the movie starts with a pan of (ahem) the universe. Ambitious much? The freeze frame tableaux as Peter tries to warn his friends of his visit from the conductor is wonderfully playful despite the fact that an actor is incapable of standing completely still unless made so by an optical printer. A mention too for Alfred Junge whose astonishing designs don't manage to date the production at all. The special effects are notable for their sheer cheek. At one point the big heavenly court scene pulls back to reveal itself as a galaxy of stars (is that really where we go?). As an effect it is very convincing despite the obvious mix halfway through but it is the idea we applaud. CG could have made it perfect but perfect is rarely great, merely perfect. As an idea, the universal courtroom in Heaven is as bold as a puffed up bullfrog on a motorway.



Apart from one rather too tidy 'Deus Ex Machina' (let's just say that a man needed another man's help but could only get it if the other man died that night... you see where I'm going with this?). But it's a small gripe (and my relationship with this movie is such that it hurt me to point it out) because the entire film is such a joy and an intelligent joy at that. Along the way (in the trial that will decide Peter's fate) the film changes tack and starts to be a revelatory treatise on prejudice and nationality. Let's be sure that love and Peter and June's fate is never abandoned but the wit and intelligence in these scenes (seemingly to affirm that we are all human beings regardless of the props and national quirks) quite takes one's breath away. Raymond Massey is the principal American actor playing the prosecutor in the afterlife and he is credible and eminently hissable.

Guess what? Amor Vincit Omnia – love conquers all, even lawyers from on high. A happy ending but then was that in any doubt? An absolute treasure of a movie made in the British milieu of kitchen sink 'reality', a fantastic fantasy with playful and endless creativity, intelligence and wit. The Archers' arrow hits the bullseye square and true with **A Matter of Life and Death**. See this film. You will be astonished.



Smother Nature

A Review of *Black Narcissus*

*"I believe that Powell's unashamed "parading of cinematic technique" is something to celebrate in world cinema. For in doing so, he captures crystallised, playful and loving visions of Britain and the British at the time of the Empire's imminent collapse. **Black Narcissus** remains just one example of this everlasting brilliance."*

Karli Luka, Senses Of Cinema

Have you ever seen a fully-grown leopard in a small cage? You know what tends to happen – violence directed outward, a ferocious attack at that which encloses it, imprisons it. It is a creature denied its identity. Whether we acknowledge it or not, whether we pedestal the human being as a superior creature or not, we are all animals with animal instincts and animal imperatives. We like to think that civilisation has tamed the beast but we all know how little it takes to let slip the veneer and unleash those boiling, broiling needs. You're familiar with the scorpion and the frog story? We can control our choices and our actions to some degree but we cannot escape our natures. Deny an animal its essence, its identity and no good will come of it. This is why celibacy in religious orders absolutely fascinates me. If you are a believer, you have to accept that God made you to be the animal you are and surely not to deliberately suppress your very spirit, your soul for want of a better word. For an omnipotent and omnipresent deity, God does fret a great deal about human sexuality. If he's everywhere he must be, by definition, the ultimate voyeur. What is His problem with those he created in the first place? But the idea of sacrificing a basic human instinct and believing wholeheartedly that this behaviour is practiced to serve God (what?)... OK, when it comes to on screen nuns, we are faced with mostly surreal choices. They can be sincere, asexual and po-faced (with a plethora of mountain warbling), one was in flight unaided (seriously, a Sally Field TV series), several were protecting nightclub singers in a witness protection cloister or they are, en masse, a writhing carpet of lust and debauchery. OK, I cheated. That's what Ken Russell movies do to you. Even the nuns in *Father Ted* were dodgy (one was a chocoholic presumably wedded to Christ so she can get her hands on his Easter Eggs). There's an ecumenical conundrum to dance to.

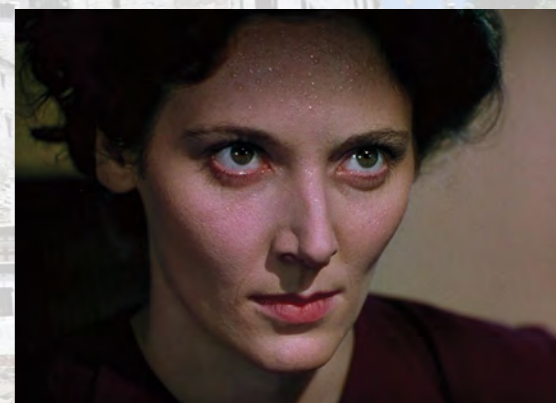


In human societies all over the world there are extreme enclaves, groups of people – like the Argentina football players of 1986 – all sharing a perverted goal. Nuns have always fascinated me because of their selfless giving in to a higher calling and yet basing their commitment on something improvable, ineffable and frankly odd. It is very obviously not seen this way by those who get the ring-tone from on high. Religion's ubiquity and antiquity is a shield against reason and rational thought. And once the vows are taken, there's no procreation, no physical abandon, well at least, not out loud. So in those undeniably sexy habits (isn't it interesting how often an adherence to a code has the opposite effect to the one intended?) Kerr and Byron in

this movie are frankly smoldering), the nuns maintain an even strain. They are trying to do good work in whatever area they have been charged to do so. The premise of **Black Narcissus** is that a small group of Anglican nuns has been sent to a remote and vertiginous, deserted palace in India to set up a school and a hospital. When there, things start to go awry. The nuns, like the British Empire, are fishes out of water and all are subject to the effect of very different people and situations that this place throws in their path. It's a sort of quasi-religious **The Shining** and what the Outlook Hotel and its history does to its new caretakers.

For a start, the palace used to house a harem and no one has thought to whitewash the (ahem) decorative walls. Lurid and overly suggestive statues are covered with net curtain material. The palace's caretaker is a mad, dentally challenged woman who's well aware of the effect the place has on susceptible minds, hers too presumably. The land agent (who of course is barely dressed throughout the movie) is as close to the epitome of 'a man' as it's possible to be, at least in the eyes of nuns in 1947. Chest hair blowing in the wind, his machismo is barely dented by riding a donkey about twelve hands too small for him. Competent gardener-nuns plant flowers instead of the necessary food and there's a mystical chap who says nothing but sits over the palace like the world's most inefficient security guard.

In charge of the order is Sister Clodagh played by a stunning Deborah Kerr. She was 26 years old when she shot this movie and the character is supposed to be ten years older but the conflict within as well as without is etched upon her wonderful performance. She's a woman whose grip on her vows is not enough to conquer the many demons snickering around her including attempts to expunge the happiness of a past love life without Christ. Her opposite in character and in many ways, the antagonist of the movie, is Sister Ruth played with psychotic gusto by director Michael Powell's lover at the time, Kathleen Byron. I kicked myself for not putting two and two together. Byron was, of course, the celestial angel welcoming the airmen to Heaven in **A Matter Of Life And Death**. A Powell and Pressburger regular, David Farrar, plays the hirsute and rugged land agent, Mr. Dean. He looks like Stephen Mangan's more attractive older brother.



Like Oliver Reed in **The Devils**, he manages to be a passive catalyst to habitual carnality (sorry, but these words ask for word play). It doesn't help matters that he turns up with precious few clothes on whenever summoned by the needy Sister Clodagh. It doesn't take Sister Ruth long to mistakenly isolate Sister Clodagh as her arch enemy when it comes to the affections of Mr. Dean. To emphasize Farrar's sexual allure (as if that was required given the way in which he is presented to those in the order), Powell has him arrive bare-chested at one point (not counting the hair) and while we enjoy unbridled machismo in a medium shot, Sister Ruth floats in from frame left like a sexually repressed Dalek. It would almost be hysterically funny if we knew that her slow mental disintegration would not yield fatal results.

Speaking of sex (were we?) let's not forget or sideline the other sexual bomb waiting to go off. I first encountered Jean Simmons as Kirk Douglas's slave love interest in *Spartacus*. Here she's seventeen and an exotic temptress who seems to exude a vital and hard-wired eroticism. Ambivalent words deserve naming and shaming. 'Temptress' implies one who invites but doesn't necessarily wish to engage. Odd that the word doesn't work for the opposite gender. What man can be described as a 'tempter'? But Simmons does a great job on Sabu.





She moves in, head angled for a kiss that's going to last a day and a half... At the final second, her head falls to his shoulder. Temptress, indeed. Although she will always be Spartacus's leading lady to me, her turn in **Narcissus** is surprising and assured.

I cannot review **Black Narcissus** without underlining that not a single shot was filmed on any known location as metaphysical as that sounds but you know what I mean. Some scenes were exteriors but the majority of the movie was shot at Pinewood on wonderfully realised sets enhanced with playfully realistic matte paintings and some non-realistic stand-alone paintings. Powell also uses intricately scaled models and the artifice employed gives the film

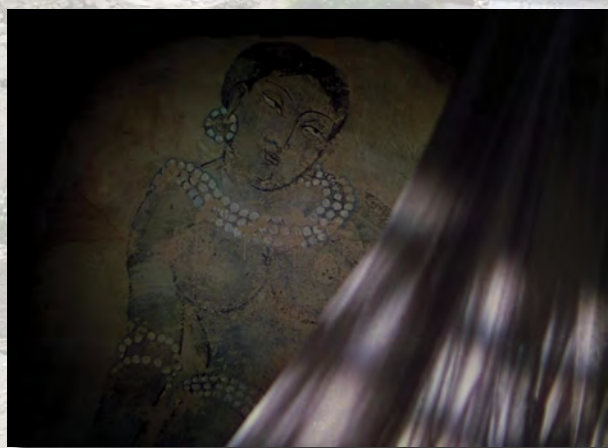
a rich, contained identity all of its own. However, the Palace of Mapo is in serious need of a health and safety inspection. Where are the rails around the terrifying drops? As a young man I fused the image of one of those drops into my mind as the primary representation of the film. Given the image, it's not difficult to understand. Each one of the three is arresting at the very least. Also, as a young man, I didn't 'get' **Black Narcissus**. I do now.

Powell initially employs dissolves to signify a flashback. In older movies you can always tell when there's going to be a dissolve or fade to black because the quality of the film goes down by a tiny but perceptible notch (it's all about how far you're printing from the original negative). Dissolves to me are mostly lazy cuts and from my years of teaching, I can always tell a newbie editor – dissolve after dissolve after dissolve with no valid reason for such creative decisions.



Ahem. This is Michael Powell we are dealing with here. On the commentary he does mention he thinks he let the dissolves go on too long. I disagree. Going back to and from Sister Clodagh's flashbacks are wonderful transitions because the visual itself is compelling. Take a look at the dissolve (before, during and after) from the fishing flashback. It's utterly sublime...

Black Narcissus is a movie where the seemingly mundane can become hugely significant and the battle between human nature and an adherence to superstition can take on extraordinary power. Stunned (as we are) to see a woman in a red dress rather than a flannelette condiment, Sister Clodagh is confronted by what she herself once was – a woman with desires and needs. Ruth's weapons and props, a violently red lipstick and a mirrored compact, presumably reflecting her real self, are brought to bear. Sister Clodagh counters with a black book created in the infancy of our species that can reflect nothing but ancient human fear and the superstitious bargains made with reason to combat them.



The Bible keeps Sister Clodagh in check even though we know she is sympathetic towards Ruth. It is a talisman, a shield and to Ruth, it's something that once dropped prompts her into action. When Ruth escapes from Sister Clodagh's vigil, there's a small but lovely detail of the net curtains falling off the erotic statues, blown down from her wake... Powell was always such a master of visual metaphor.



Scarlet Fever

A Review of The Red Shoes

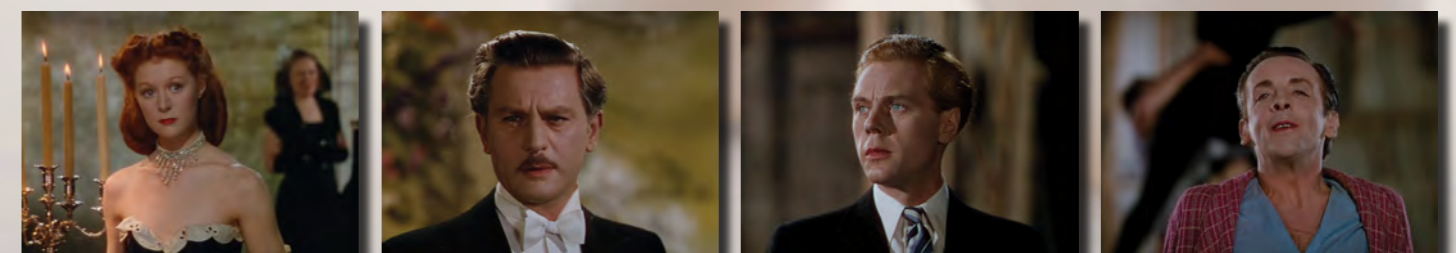
Ballet? *Ballet?* You have got to be kidding. My mother was constantly reminding me that ballet dancers were fitter than I was, that they trained harder than any other professional in any other job. I just shrugged off the girly stuff. OK, mum. Fine. I was 16 being sucked under by the whirlpool of raging hormones. It was the year of **Star Wars** and it still hadn't hit these shores. I had the Meko single, the pop version of the Williams main theme and Cantina band and there was nothing in my life except for a huge chasm of anticipation... And then on BBC 2 that year, a film was to be televised about ballet. Count me out. Shame on me (I can retrospectively be shamed). Before you could say 'pas de deux', I was plonked in front of the TV with a warning that if I could not regale a girlfriend with the plot the next day, she would cease to be my friend. Ain't love grand? Hands on hips, achingly pretty head craned to one side in a sort of physical question mark, I was suitably challenged. I watched.



The next day I started to babble and rave about the plot, the colour (oh, the colour), the dancing, the sheer extraordinary surreality of it (most 16 year olds didn't, to my knowledge, have a definition of the word 'surreal' cellotaped to their wardrobe) and above all the superlative editing that slowly led me to some kind of delayed epiphany. **The way the pictures are put together is where the power resides.** This idea has done more for my career than any other and it was **The Red Shoes** that led me to it. Thank you editor, Reginald Mills.

It strikes me as being notable that I have had more revelations about cinema in the presence of the work of Mr. Powell and Mr. Pressburger than any other filmmakers. They opened my eyes to what cinema was capable of. As Emeric Pressburger said to his partner, quoted in A.L. Kennedy's excellent BFI Classic of P & P's **The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp** from Pressburger's biography *The Life and Death of A Screenwriter* by Kevin Macdonald:

"How many times have I told you that a film is not words... It is thoughts and feelings, surprises, suspense, accident."





By the time the master Lermontov had uttered the question “Why do you want to dance?” to Vicky Page (soon to be the dancer in the titular red shoes) I was entranced. Her answer “Why do you want to live?” struck a chord so deep I felt like my stomach was having a root canal. Why did I want to make films? The same answer. Ambition was a compelling master and it seemed as if P & P had articulated my deepest goals in a movie about a ballerina! Those crafty bastards!

The story of **The Red Shoes** is easy to summarize – famed ballet maestro Lermontov finds talented ballerina Vicky Page, a girl who has the talent to go right to the top. Her launch pad (The Ballet of the Red Shoes) thrusts her into the public’s adoring gaze but love barges in, in the shape of Red Shoes’ composer Elliott Craster. Love versus a desire or ambition to be the greatest... It can only and does end in tears. But before the tears, there are two hours of extraordinary film making and if there is a central performance that wraps the movie around itself, it’s Anton Walbrook’s.

Walbrook plays the great Boris Lermontov, the powerful ballet impresario. Here is a man driven by the need to find the zenith of physical grace. He finds those who aim high and stay aloft but then become adherents of their own publicity, divas (goddesses) thrust into Asgard by force of their own self-belief. Even this can do nothing against the brutal march of time. Lermontov is after someone fresh, someone who can promise him the stars as he can promise to make them one. But Vicky Page is not a simple celeb aching to be adored and recognised the world over. She is a dancer, a talented and dedicated dancer who works hard for her fame.

Lermontov’s players (ranging from Robert Helpmann, the leading dancer of his day to Leonide Massine, the Russian ballet dancer) all form a tight knit and tremendously loyal company who support each other and help cement Lermontov’s starry reputation. Here is a Svengali, a manager of extreme talent, an organiser of human resources in the name of art. Lermontov wants to get ‘there’, the plateau upon which sit the greats, those who have pushed their art to another level. **The Red Shoes** never presents Lermontov as a talent in and of himself (except perhaps for hav-

ing the talent to maintain the illusion of great sophistication and aloofness) but does illuminate him starkly by giving him one terrible weakness – he falls in love and utterly denies it within himself and harshly criticises it in others. He may successfully fool himself and others in his erotic ankle caress of the statue of a ballerina’s toe balanced foot – he’s in it for the art! But we know better. There are several dazzling technical tricks in this sumptuous treat. I first remember being forced to acknowledge the editor (or rather what the director had planned to edit in a certain way, let’s not deify editors too much, heaven forbid) while watching a small ballet company perform. Vicky Page steps out and in stunning pirouettes, each accompanied by a POV (stop and think). **The Red Shoes** was shot in Technicolor, requiring cameras the size of chest freezers. How did they get the pirouette POV? For once, it may be true that it was done with mirrors.

One of the most haunting images in a film full of such sights, is Vicky imploring her husband to take off the red shoes, the potent symbol of being controlled. Her mad dash to get away from the two men who represent her specific dilemma is presented with extraordinary speed and vital shots go by in frames. Perhaps this was a deliberate ploy on P & P’s behalf. One never really knows if Vicky Page commits suicide or falls as she’s running headlong towards the only fate she has to submit to.

The Red Shoes is one of those intensely passionate movies that entices future ballerinas to squeeze into the tutu. It’s movies like this that prise open the door so we can begin to recognise that we can be so much more than the sum of our body parts. We can dance. We can all dance.

One trivial aside: in Monte Carlo, where the climax takes place, there is a scene between Craster and Page and in the background I could easily be convinced that standing just outside on the balcony was the demon Pazazou from **The Exorcist**.





It Thinks, Therefore A.I.



The Unstoppable March of Artificial Intelligence by Sir Kit Braker



I was sitting next to a famous computer game designer (as you do) waiting for our turn on a neighbour's lawn tennis court a few months ago. A stable version of Chat GPT* had just hit the headlines. My first response was a weary attempt at risqué humour (ten years ago, in less sensitive times, it may have simply been humour)... "Was this a social network for the LGBTQ community and if so, what did the 'P' stand for?" The mind boggles. My friend opened up the Chatbot (an artificial intelligence designed to mimic a human conversationalist) on his phone and invited me to ask it a question. Not sure what I was doing I asked something Google could've answered in a nanosecond.

My friend suggested the same question but enlarged its scope. He said "Please write a short film screenplay on how someone may succeed in programming the Enterprise D's replicators to produce perfect pancakes." Seconds later (it may have been faster), said screenplay arrived and I gawped as I read a reasonably accurate 20 page script which had done exactly as I had asked all fully industry standard formatted. All the detail of *Star Trek The Next Generation* was subtly woven in (there was a character who was stuck on Voyager inserted but I forgave such a lapse of knowledge of deep Trekkian lore) and to say I was astounded may be underplaying my amazement. It was extraordinary.

And my first thought was an unworthy one – did this represent the potential replacement or eradication of all human creativity? OK, OK... That's going a little far. Anyone who's using the latest version of Photoshop will understand that we have reached either a defining moment in human history or have galloped up to the tipping point and there is no going back. Photoshop can now effortlessly (with a little help,) with a single click remove the background from a subject. It can add generative

content to your artwork from its vast library of images and it can, given the right background, generate an extension of that background generating its own detail not present in the original photo. Roughly lasso a tourist standing in front of the Eiffel Tower and Photoshop, via artificial intelligence, will replace the tourist with the accurate part of the Eiffel Tower the person was concealing. Illustrating this article are several pictures of half of my cutting room/office with a different creature laying on the carpet. No further work than a single click ('generative fill') has been done to summon these creatures into existence. As odd as it may sound but there is no elephant in the room intended here. I invite you to guess which one is not generated by A.I.**



Having just seen the latest **Mission Impossible** in which the 'villain' is an A.I. with global domination on its mind, or central processing unit, that world seemed ever closer and ever more frightening. This is partly due to the fact that like certain English actors, A.I. has almost always been cast as scary, impenetrably cold, evil machines, such as HAL 9000, Ultron, and **Demon Seed's** Proteus to name three off the top of my head. Something most of us cannot grasp intellectually will always be at the very best worrying and the worst, terrifying. 'The Entity', **Mission Impossible's**

strobing blue A.I. (not the greatest name, granted) effortlessly directs Ethan to a trap by mimicking IMF colleague Benji's voice. Its opening gambit is to fool a Russian submarine via software ghosts. For the first time in a cinema, these kind of threats seemed oddly plausible.

"One computer scientist recently told me she's planning to create a secret code word that only she and her elderly parents know, so that if they ever hear her voice on the other end of the phone pleading for help or money, they'll

know whether it's been generated by an A.I. trained on her publicly available lectures to sound exactly like her and scam them."

Adrienne LaFrance, 'In Defence of Humanity', Atlantic Magazine, June/July 2023

So the concern is that if A.I. can replace human creativity, do we all simply become sedate consumers? There's a piece of software called StoryFit that is used in conjunction with human created ideas which enhances their potential acceptance by an audience by doing what a good critic might do – point out character and plot inconsistencies, measure up the current cultural or narrative trends over the years to see what might play better for an audience given the basic screenplay on the table and the culture in which it was written. I've stayed away from *The Last of Us* because I have PTZF, (post-traumatic zombie-fatigue) and couldn't finish *The Walking Dead* after being a big fan for many years. My friends are urging me to check out *The Last of Us* which I will (especially after last July's wonderful Virtual Glass of Wine with Timothy ('honorable Brit!') Good and his colleague making a surprise appearance, Emily Mendez) but I was surprised to note that it was developed by analysing the zombie genre with its algorithms and suggesting certain changes to make the series more attractive.



For more on this fascinating and creative use of A.I., Google "Storyfit.com" and "*The Last of Us*". This is the use of this technology which reportedly makes a TV series or movie with a multimillion dollar investment stand more chance of breaking even or even being successful. You may still find this use of A.I. a little disquieting and might ask, how could a series on chess be so successful (*The Queen's Gambit* of course) without a human creative behind it? I quote StoryFit's Founder and CEO, Monica Landers...

"Who would've guessed a series about chess would be any good? But when we measure that character, she is off the charts strong and original. So those are the kind of elements we're looking for."

The software was originally applied to the publishing industry but of all things, that business model was deemed too antiquated and inflexible and it moved into the fertile waters of the film and TV industry. StoryFit is seen by many who have experienced its data collection as a strong creative force behind favourite and successful TV series and movies. It's a confirmation of the ancient canard of the right tool for the right job. My first rather lumpen simile was relating A.I. to a knife. We use knives every day for specific purposes. As do the few people who want to do harm to others. As far as I can glean, StoryFit quietly makes it more efficient to cut up and consume food and makes the food more attractive to diners.

But the dark side is that tool use can be perverted. Stabbing someone, as the Joker observed in *The Dark Knight*, is a moment of perverse intimacy between two people. "See, in those last moments, people show you who they really are..." Being hurt by the actions of A.I. – A.I. being essentially anonymous – is light years away from intimacy however perverse. That distance dilutes the guilt. There's no human conscience to parse the action. It's that ease of the creation of chaos that's the real problem.

If you want to see real chaos on a small but potent scale, please google "Heidi Trailer" and "A.I.". Here are a few grabs from the YouTube video, the result of someone asking A.I. to produce a trailer for a fictitious film. Bear in mind that the character of Heidi is a five year-old girl in her grandfather's care who lives in the Swiss alps and Ted Lasso like, positively affects everyone she comes into contact with. It's a children's story about a lovely child. Enjoy the following...



The results are truly nightmarish and while I don't know anything other than the instruction "Make me a trailer for Heidi," I simply cannot imagine what was going through the A.I.'s 'mind'...

Both Trump and Johnson have had their metaphorical fifteen seconds in the limelight and both have failed to dull or nullify the rigorous democratic safety features that keep our societies in check thwarting their inherent narcissism, a palpable risk to the democratic norms by which we all live and function. Wise people in the distant past understood what human beings were capable of and constructed their rules and laws to literally protect ourselves from ourselves. A.I. may breach those safety features but for now, let us celebrate what our primal natures have managed to keep in check and what it really means, right now without digital augmentation, to be human.

"No book, no photograph, no television broadcast, no tweet, no meme, no augmented reality, no hologram, no A.I.-generated blueprint or fever dream can replace what we as humans experience. This is why you make the trip, you cross the ocean, you watch the sunset, you hear the crickets, you notice the phase of the moon. It is why you touch the arm of the person beside you as you laugh. And it is why you stand in awe at the Jardin des Plantes, floored by the universe as it reveals its hidden code to you."

Adrienne LaFrance, 'In Defence of Humanity', Atlantic Magazine, June/July 2023

*Chat GPT – Generative Pre-Trained Transformer. Nope, me neither.

**All of them are A.I. generated of course. Even the dog. And I have two real ones of those but they weren't available...



BARRY PETERS

7th March 1937 – 16th May 2023

One of the great and memorable characters of the cutting rooms has left us. The sudden loss of Barry Peters – a mere 85 – will be a hard burden to bear for all who knew him. He was not only my best friend, business partner and fine editor – he was a wonderful human being. I have never met or had the pleasure of working with such a generous, loyal human being. Nothing phased him – nothing riled him and his great sense of humour saved many a day.

I first met Barry around 1958 – 1959 at Pinewood Studios where he was working as an assistant to the legendary editor Gordon Stone on a Disney film. In those days the cutting room personnel, editors, 1st and 2nd assistants, sound editors et al – congregated in the canteen for morning and afternoon tea and cheese rolls. It was here in this genial atmosphere I met the man. Full of stories of his adventures on the slopes of San Moritz to the gambling denizens of Mayfair, he kept everyone in fits of laughter – never had an unkind word about anyone – you couldn't help but love him, especially when he told the story, against himself, of how he turned down Stanley Kubrick to go and work for Disney!

So this started a deep friendship from that time to today and his untimely departure. Together Barry and I purchased the second Moviola (circa 1961) to arrive in the show rooms of Studio Film Labs in Dean Street. We built the business up into New Central Cutting Rooms at 99 Dean Street (now a tube station) – introducing well-lit and carpeted cutting rooms! Meanwhile Barry estab-

lished his reputation as a loyal, formidable and creative editor to many producers and directors in the UK and in Hollywood. He won innumerable awards among them: 1988 UK Editors Guild Award Won, *Porterhouse Blue* 1988 BAFTA Awards Nominated, BAFTA TV Award Best Film Editor for *Porterhouse Blue* BAFTA Awards Nominated and BAFTA TV Award Best Film Editor for *Paradise Postponed* (1986).

I was lucky enough to have him edit many of my films over the years working in distant locations and for dubious companies. He transitioned from film editing to digital editing without losing a frame! His devotion to his family, his loyalty, creativity and enhancement of the art of editing is a great credit to him. In his later years, when most editors are put out to grass, great-grandfather Barry held no grudge and continued to give advice and help up-and-coming editors to advance in the wonderful world of film editing - 'editing is the essence of film' – he would say. Actually, I think he was quoting Eisenstein!

My family and I will treasure the memories of this very special man, gregarious, witty, great poker and pool player, golfer, cricketer, you name it – and generous to a fault. My and my family's love and sympathy go out to Barry's amazing and loving family, wife Helen, children, Karen, Chris, Nicky and the many, many grandchildren.

Kevin Connor

Los Angeles May 21, 2023



I first met Barry Peters on a TV movie. He came on as the second editor with his lovely wife, Helen, assisting him. I was the second assistant and helped out both editing teams. I was immediately struck by how relaxed and charming Barry was (and Helen just as much) and we all really hit it off. Barry's deep passion for golf was always evident, but so was his passion for film editing.

About a year later, Barry and Helen, who was by then pregnant with their first child, asked me to join them as the second assistant on a huge mini-series being directed by Kevin Connor, who Barry had worked with many times before. When Helen left to give birth to their son, Chris, I took over as the first assistant and I was now able to work very closely with Barry. I discovered he was a very clever editor, always finding ingenious ways to get the very best out of the material. He was inventive and always enthusiastic.

When he saw how keen I was to learn the craft, he gave me several sequences to cut by myself and offered excellent advice, but he did not try to impose his own ideas. He encouraged me to find my own solutions and to think carefully about clarity of storytelling. Barry knew his stuff. I deeply respected his smart advice and support and working with Barry remains one of the highlights of my career in the cutting rooms.

It was a huge privilege to know and work with Barry. He will be greatly missed by so many who loved and respected him. He was quite simply a wonderful, warm hearted gentleman, a very talented editor, and, above

all, a great golfer. He always had a smile on his face and that is how I will remember him. My deep condolences go to Barry's wonderful and beloved wife, Helen, and his family.

Rob Green

June 8th 2023

Barry Peters, a BAFTA nominated film editor and a board member of GBFTE for many years, died aged 85 of cancer. He had a great career in the film industry and will be sadly missed by his many friends and colleagues and by his lovely wife Helen and their children.

I will miss him and his wonderful stories.

John Grover BFE

I was saddened to hear of the recent passing of Barry Peters. Barry was a close ally to Director Kevin Connor whom I had the pleasure of working with on around five occasions in India, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Morocco and Budapest. I often saw Barry and Helen at the Pinewood screenings and we always found time to reminisce. I will always remember his jovial spirit and good nature, a person always approachable for a conversation whatever the topic.

Clive Copland AMPS

(Production Sound Mixer)

R. I. P.



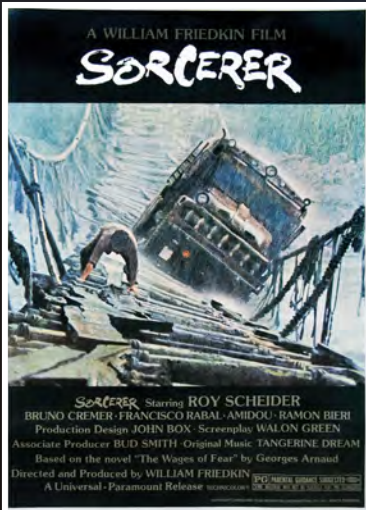
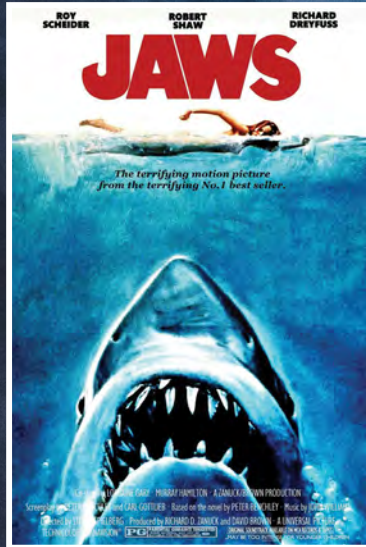
Director William Friedkin



DOP Bill Butler



Editor Arthur Schmidt



AND THANK YOU.