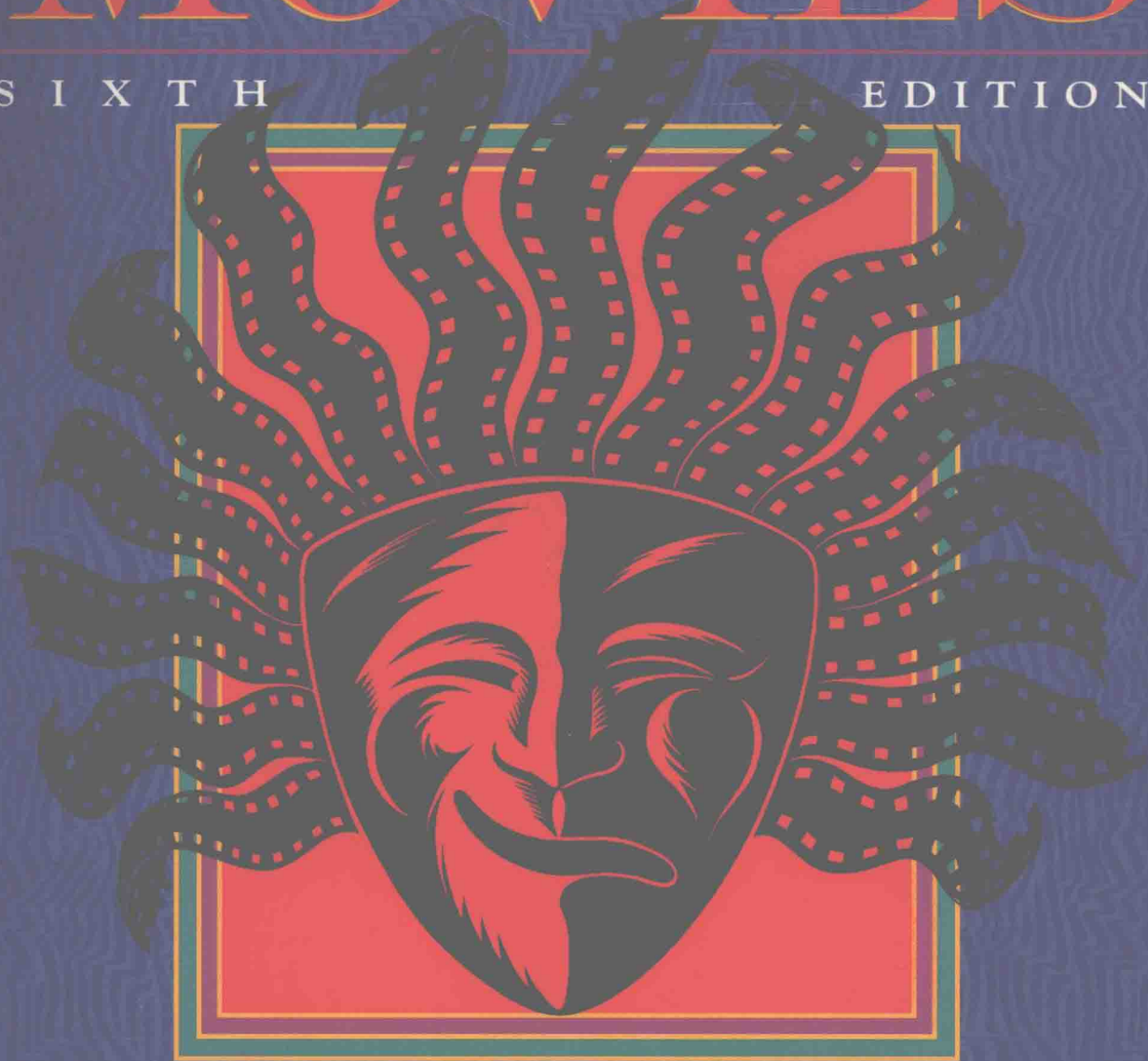


A Short History of the
MOVIES

S I X T H E D I T I O N



GERALD MAST ■ BRUCE F. KAWIN

A Short History of the Movies

SIXTH EDITION

Gerald Mast

Late, of the University of Chicago

Bruce F. Kawin

University of Colorado at Boulder

Allyn and Bacon

Boston • London • Toronto • Sydney • Tokyo • Singapore

Editor in Chief, Humanities: Joe Opiela
Editorial Assistant: Susannah Davidson
Executive Marketing Manager: Lisa Kimball
Editorial-Production Administrator: Susan Brown
Editorial-Production Service: Ruttle, Shaw & Wetherill, Inc.
Composition Buyer: Linda Cox
Manufacturing Buyer: Megan Cochran
Cover Administrator: Linda Knowles
Cover Designer: Studio Nine



Copyright © 1996 by Allyn & Bacon
A Simon & Schuster Company
Needham Heights, MA 02194

Previous editions copyrighted © 1971, 1976, and 1981 by the Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.; copyright © 1986 by Gerald Mast; copyright © 1992 by Macmillan Publishing Company, a division of Macmillan, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of the material protected by this copyright notice may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright holder.

Photo Credits are listed in the Acknowledgments which is an extension of the copyright page.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Mast, Gerald [date]

A short history of the movies/Gerald Mast.—6th ed./revised
by Bruce Kawin.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-02-377075-9

I. Motion pictures—History. I. Kawin, Bruce, [date]

II. Title.

PN1993.5.A1M39 1996

791.43'09—dc20

95-35138

CIP

Preface

From its first edition, Gerald Mast's *A Short History of the Movies* helped to focus the field of film studies; it has its own role in film history. Comprehensively conceived, evocatively illustrated, and eminently readable, drawing useful generalizations and analyzing key works in depth, it became the foundation for the modern film history course. And as the field developed, so did the book. With each edition it grew longer and more comprehensive, responding vigorously to new movies and new conceptions of film history.

When Gerald Mast died in 1988, I took over the responsibility of revising and updating the *Short History*, beginning with the fifth edition. Like the previous edition, this sixth edition has been completely updated, scrupulously corrected, and comprehensively expanded—without becoming significantly longer. Playing the role of a respectful but aggressive editor, I have tightened and cut the text to make room for discussions of new or previously undiscussed films, filmmakers, and national cinemas, as well as technical and business developments. The book

has also been made easier to use, thanks to some minor reorganization (notably in Chapter 13) and to the introduction of second-level subheadings, which divide lengthy sections by topic; for a quick search, the Contents is now almost as useful as the Index.

No vital material has been taken out; in fact, a great deal has been added. Many of the discussions have been revised to make their essential points more clear, to provide more detailed examples, and to fix the occasional rhetorical or factual problem. Hundreds of names, dates, and titles have been corrected, based on such primary resources as original signatures and complete prints. Both silent and sound documentaries are discussed at greater length. A new section on computers explains how they are used by contemporary filmmakers and examines both film and computers in the context of the communications revolution of the 1990s. Post-Stalinist cinema has been moved out of the chapter on silent Soviet cinema and into a new, more recent section in Chapter 16 on filmmaking in Russia and the former Soviet Union through 1994. The

cinemas of Hong Kong, Ireland, and New Zealand have each been expanded from a sentence or less to a page or more; the cinemas of Greece and Taiwan have been added; and the discussions of filmmaking in China, France, Hungary, Poland, and the former Yugoslavia have been significantly extended and updated.

In addition to providing up-to-date information about new filmmakers, technologies, and international developments, this edition is full of new material on the last hundred years of moviemaking: on the first woman filmmaker, the narrative breakthroughs achieved by the Brighton School, the Schüfftan process and other special effects, Eisenstein's first sound film, the real contributions of Lee de Forest, the histories of the major studios, Nazi cinema, the Hollywood Ten, *cinéma vérité*, and Hitchcock's work after 1960, to offer just a few examples.

Filmmakers new to this edition include Theodoros Angelopoulos, Charles Burnett, Jane Campion, Ildikó Enyedi, Alice Guy, Agnieszka Holland, Mike Leigh, Neil Jordan, Krzysztof Kieślowski, Emir Kusturica, Claude Lanzmann, Ang Lee, Lotte Reiniger, Larissa Shepitko, Quentin Tarantino, John Woo, and Krzysztof Zanussi. Among the most significantly revised discussions are those of Michelangelo Antonioni, Tim Burton, James Cameron, Chen Kaige, Francis Ford Coppola, Clint Eastwood, Federico Fellini, Jean-Luc Godard, Howard Hawks, Chris Marker, Marcel Ophüls, Sergei Paradjanov, Otto Preminger, Alain Resnais, Leni Riefenstahl, Steven Spielberg, Oliver Stone, Andrei Tarkovsky, Jean Vigo, Luchino Visconti, John Whitney, Robert Zemeckis, and Zhang Yimou. From the making of *Salt of the Earth* to the influence of *Star Wars*, from the more technically sophisticated glossary to the post-Cold War political context, and from the 30 new stills to the hundreds of new movies, this book offers a comprehensive and economical survey of film history that is as accurate and clear as I can make it.

But this is still Gerald Mast's book—in its solid, efficient structure; in its *auteurist* emphasis on the directors of narrative films; in its engaged and engaging tone; in its interdisciplinary ap-

proach and humanistic spirit; and in most of its analyses, arguments, and conclusions. It has simply been re-researched, augmented, and brought up to date—tasks made easier by how well the *Short History* was thought out and put together in the first place.

In his prefaces Gerald always warmly thanked those who contributed to this book through its many editions. There are those who helped him in preparing the manuscripts: Joe Adamson, Richard Meran Barsam, Madeline Cook, Jeanne Eichenseer, Antonín J. Liehm, Steven Jack, Richard Dyer MacCann, John Matthew, Ned McLeroy, Leonard Quart, William Reiter, Burnell Y. Sitterly, and Tom Wittenberg. There are those who helped him see films or collect stills: Mary Corliss (of the Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive), Walter J. Dauler (of Audio-Brandon Films), Darrell Flugg, Bill Franz, Murray Glass (of Em Gee Films), Steven Harvey, Peter Meyer (formerly of Janus Films and now of Corinth Films), the late Adam Reilly, Emily Sieger, and Charles Silver (of the Museum of Modern Art). The fourth edition owed much to the efforts of editor Paul O'Connell and readers Tag Gallagher and myself.

As usual, the photographs that accompany the text are either frame enlargements (also called blowups), which may be blurry, but capture a literal shot of a film, or production stills, taken on the set with a still camera and often posed, so that they rarely duplicate a literal view of a film, but always look better in a book. For their help in obtaining the new stills for the fifth edition, I remain deeply grateful to Mary Corliss and Terry Geesken of the Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive; to the restorer of *Lawrence of Arabia*, Robert A. Harris of Biograph Entertainment; to Helen LaVarre of Columbia Pictures; and to Martin Scorsese. For their help in granting or facilitating permission to use those stills (for specifics and formal copyright notices, see "Acknowledgments," page 695), I wish to renew my thanks to Herbert Nusbaum and Joan Pierce of MGM/UA Communications Co. For their help in obtaining stills for the sixth edition, I am indebted, as usual, to Terry Geesken of MOMA and to Howie Movshovitz of the *Denver Post*.

The fifth edition could not have been completed without the help, advice, and support of Bruce Bassoff, Stan Brakhage, Ray Carney, David Cook, Tony English, Steven Englund, Suranjan Ganguly, Kelly Gomez, Dan Greenberg, David James, Marian Keane, Marsha Kinder, Frank and Celeste McConnell, Bill McLeod, Charles Middleton, Jim Palmer, Donald Richie, and William Van Wert.

Finally, let me thank those who lent their expertise and encouragement to the immense project of researching and preparing the sixth edition: Stan Brakhage, Ann R. Cacoullos, Paul

Jarrico, Marian Keane, Pablo Kjolseth, Fred Link, Frank McConnell, Charles Middleton, Herbert Nusbaum, Stan Reubenstein, David Shepard, Steve Wingate, and Maurice H. Zouary. And for contributions above and beyond the call of duty, for running down obscure information at a moment's notice and helping me figure out the book for a year, this acknowledgment can only begin to express my thanks to Andrew Horton, Howie Movshovitz, and Lori Pelham.

Bruce F. Kawin

Contents

Preface	ix	
Chapter 1	Introductory Assumptions	1
Chapter 2	Birth	9
	Persistence of Vision	9
	Stroboscopic Toys	10
	Photography	12
	Muybridge and Marey	12
	Thomas Edison	14
	W. K. L. Dickson	14
	The Kinetoscope	17
	Projection	18
	The Magic Lantern	19
	The Lumière Brothers	21
	The Vitascope	23
	The First Films	24
Chapter 3	Film Narrative, Commercial Expansion	29
	Early Companies	29
	Narrative	32
	Georges Méliès	33
	Cohl and Others	37
	Edwin S. Porter	38
	From Brighton to Biograph	43

	Business Wars	47
	The Film d'Art	51
Chapter 4	Griffith	54
	Apprenticeship	54
	Biograph: The One-Reelers	56
	Two Reels and Up	64
	<i>The Birth of a Nation</i>	69
	<i>Intolerance</i>	75
	1917–31	79
	<i>Broken Blossoms</i> and <i>Way Down East</i>	81
	The Struggle	84
Chapter 5	Mack Sennett and the Chaplin Shorts	87
	Krazy Keystones	87
	Charlie	93
Chapter 6	Movie Czars and Movie Stars	104
	Stars over Hollywood	105
	The First Stars	105
	California, Here We Come	109
	The Emperors and Their Rule	109
	Major Studios	110
	Movie Palaces	112
	Morality	113
	Sermons and Scandals	114
	The Hays Office	116
	Films and Filmmakers, 1910–28	116
	Thomas Ince	117
	Douglas Fairbanks	118
	DeMille and von Stroheim	119
	<i>Greed</i>	123
	Henry King	126
	Oscar Micheaux	127
	Webber and Watson	128
	Weber and Women	129
	King Vidor	130
	Lubitsch and Others	131
	Flaherty and the Silent Documentary	132
	The Comics	134
	Laurel and Hardy and Hal Roach	134
	Harold Lloyd	135
	Harry Langdon	136
	Buster Keaton	137
	<i>The Gold Rush</i> and <i>The General</i>	140
	Hollywood and the Jazz Age	144
	Modernism	144
	Jazz, Booze, and It	144
Chapter 7	The German Golden Age	150
	Expressionism, Realism, and the Studio Film	150

Fantasy	153	
<i>Caligari</i>	153	
<i>Destiny and Metropolis</i>	155	
<i>Nosferatu</i> and Others	159	
Psychology	161	
<i>The Last Laugh</i>	161	
Pabst and <i>die neue Sachlichkeit</i>	164	
The End of an Era	167	
Beyond the Studio	168	
Exodus to Hollywood	169	
Using Sound	171	
Leni Riefenstahl	172	
Chapter 8 Soviet Montage		175
The Kuleshov Workshop	176	
Sergei M. Eisenstein	178	
<i>Battleship Potemkin</i>	180	
<i>October</i>	185	
Sound and Color	187	
Vsevolod I. Pudovkin	188	
<i>Mother</i>	190	
Later Works	192	
Other Major Figures	196	
Alexander Dovzhenko	196	
Dziga Vertov	198	
Socialist Realism	200	
Chapter 9 Sound		202
Processes	202	
Problems	207	
Solutions	209	
Chapter 10 France between the Wars		216
Surrealism and Other Movements	216	
Gance and Dreyer	220	
Abel Gance	220	
<i>The Passion of Joan of Arc</i>	223	
René Clair	225	
Jean Renoir	229	
<i>Grand Illusion</i>	230	
<i>The Rules of the Game</i>	233	
Vigo and Others	235	
Jean Vigo	236	
Carné and Prévert	239	
Chapter 11 The American Studio Years: 1930–45		243
Film Cycles and Cinematic Conventions	244	
The Production Code	244	
Cycles	246	
Studios and Style	249	
The Comics	254	

Late Chaplin	254
Disney's World	256
Lubitsch and Sound	257
Frank Capra	258
Preston Sturges	260
George Cukor	261
The Marx Brothers	263
Mae West	263
W. C. Fields	264
Masters of Mood and Action	266
Josef von Sternberg	266
John Ford	271
Howard Hawks	276
Alfred Hitchcock	281
Orson Welles	285

Chapter 12 Hollywood in Transition: 1946–65 **295**

Enemies within: Freedom of Association and Free Entertainment	295
The Hollywood Ten	297
3-D, CinemaScope, Color, and the Tube	299
Films in the Transitional Era	308
Freedom of Speech, Preminger, and the Blacklist	310
Message Pictures: Kazan and Others	311
John Huston	313
<i>Film Noir</i> and Other Genres	315
The Freed Musicals	321
Surfaces and Subversions	324
Samuel Fuller	324
Late Hitchcock	326
Nicholas Ray	329
Late Ford	331
Douglas Sirk	333
Finding the Audience	335

Chapter 13 Neorealism and the New Wave **338**

Italian Neorealism	339
Roberto Rossellini	340
De Sica and Zavattini	342
Luchino Visconti	344
Romantics and Antiromantics	345
Federico Fellini	345
Michelangelo Antonioni	350
Pasolini and Bertolucci	355
Germi, Leone, and Others	358
France—Postwar Classicism	362
Cocteau and Others	362
Max Ophüls	364
Robert Bresson	368
Tati, Clouzot, and Clément	369
1959 and After	371
The New Wave	372

François Truffaut	373
Jean-Luc Godard	378
Alain Resnais	383
Chabrol, Rohmer, and Rivette	386
Varda, Marker, and the Documentary	387
Malle and Others	390
The French (and Italian) Revolution	394

Chapter 14 Emerging National Traditions 1: 1945– **396**

Sweden	396
Ingmar Bergman	397
England	407
Postwar Masters	407
Another New Wave	412
From <i>A Hard Day's Night</i> to <i>Masterpiece Theatre</i>	415
Central and Eastern Europe	421
The Czech Golden Age	421
Poland	426
Hungary	429
The Balkan States	430
Cinemas East	431
Japan	431
India	449
China	455
Taiwan and Hong Kong	459

Chapter 15 Hollywood Renaissance: 1964–76 **461**

The New American <i>Auteurs</i>	470
John Cassavetes	470
Woody Allen	471
Robert Altman	474
Francis Ford Coppola	476
Martin Scorsese	479
Malick, De Palma, and Others	482
Stanley Kubrick	490
The Independent American Cinema	493
Early History	494
The New Film Poets	495

Chapter 16 Emerging National Traditions 2: 1968– **501**

<i>Das neue Kino</i>	501
Rainer Werner Fassbinder	503
Werner Herzog	507
Wim Wenders	509
Von Trotta and Others	513
Third World Cinemas	514
Emerging Cinemas, Emerging Concerns	515
Instructive Dramas	517
Documentaries	520
Alea and Sembene	522
Up from Down Under, Down from Up Above	525

Australia	525
New Zealand	529
Canada	531
Other English-Language Cinemas	533
Russia and the Former Soviet Union	534
Paradjanov, Tarkovsky, and Others	535
<i>Glasnost</i> and After	537
The New Internationalism	538
Luis Buñuel	541

Chapter 17 The Return of the Myths: 1977– 547

<i>Star Wars</i> and the New Mythology	550
Supermen, Slashers, and Cops	551
Feelgood Movies and Bummers	553
Popular Heroes and Postmodern Irony	556
Emerging Directors	558
Lucas and Spielberg	558
Dark Satire: Lynch, Waters, and Others	561
The Comic Edge: Burton, Zemeckis, and Others	568
Politics, Insight, and Violence: Lee, Carpenter, and Others	575
Business and Technology	590
It's A Wonderful Deal	590
Movies in the Age of Video	595
Enter the Computer	601
The Look of the Future	607

Appendix: For Further Reading and Viewing	611
Distributors	662
Glossary	665
Acknowledgments	679
Index	681

Introductory Assumptions

The first audience watched a motion picture flicker on a screen in 1895. Since then, the movies have developed from a simple recording device—the first films merely captured a scenic or not-so-scenic view—to a complex art and business. The first movie audiences were delighted to see that it was possible to record a moving scene on film; today we debate the desirability, rather than the possibility, of capturing an image. The important question for the first film audiences was, “Is the image discernible?” rather than, “Is the image meaningful?” From the simple beginning of cranking a camera to record a scene, filmmakers have learned that their art depends on the way the camera shapes the scene they are recording. Analogous to the novel, the completed narrative film is not just a story, but a story told in a certain way, and it is impossible to separate what is told from how it is told. Just as novelists discovered that narrative technique can be either subtly invisible—as in Flaubert or Hemingway—or intrusively self-conscious—as in Joyce or Faulkner—so too the filmmaker can construct a lucid, apparently artless story or a complex, almost chaotic maze for traveling to the story. The wonder is that while the evolution of narrative fiction can be traced back thousands

of years, the movies have evolved such complex techniques in a mere century.

The history of the movies is, first of all, the history of a new art. Though it has affinities with fiction, drama, dance, painting, photography, and music, like each of these kindred arts it has a “poetics” of its own. When the early films turned from scenic views to fictional stories, directors assumed that the poetics of the film were similar to those of the stage. Stage acting, stage movement, stage stories, stage players, and stage perspectives dominated early story films. The camera was assumed to be a passive spectator in a theatre audience, and just as the spectator has only one seat, the camera had only one position from which to shoot a scene.

Time and experimentation revealed that the camera was anchored by analogy alone—and that the analogy was false. The scene—the locale—is the basic unit of the stage because space in the theatre is so concrete. The audience sits here, the characters play there, the scenery is fixed in space behind the action. But space in the film is completely elastic; only the screen is fixed, not the action on it. Directors discovered that the unit of a film is the shot, not the scene, that shots can be joined together in any number

of combinations to produce whole scenes, and that scenes can be varied and juxtaposed and paralleled in any number of ways. Unity of place, a rather basic and practical principle of the stage, does not apply to the movie. More applicable is what the earliest film theorist, Hugo Münsterberg, called a “unity of action,” an appropriate succession of images that produces the desired narrative continuity, the intended meaning, and the appropriate emotional tension of the film as a whole. By the end of the Silent Era this principle had been not only discovered but demonstrated.

The discovery of sound raised doubts about the discoveries of the preceding 30 years. Once again the analogy with the stage was pursued; once again stage actors, stage writers, stage directors, and stage techniques flooded the movies. And once again, the analogy was found to be false. Just as the stage is anchored visually in space, so too is it anchored by sound. Words come from the speaker’s mouth; you listen to them and watch the mouth. But movies were free to show any kind of picture while the words came from the speaker’s mouth. Synchronization of picture and sound also allowed for the disjunction of picture and sound. Further, the freedom of the movies from spatial confinement allowed a greater freedom in the kinds of sounds they could use: natural sounds, musical underscoring, distortion effects, private thoughts, and so forth. Whereas the history of the silent film could be summarized as the discovery of the different means of producing an evocative *succession* of visual images, the history of the sound film is the discovery of the different means of producing an evocative *integration* of visual images and sound.

Just as the history of the novel is, to some extent, a catalogue of important novels, the history of film as an art centers on important films. In film history, a discussion of the significant movies is especially relevant, for the individual films are not only milestones on a historical path, but also significant artistic discoveries that almost immediately influenced other filmmakers. Although Shakespeare drew from Seneca and Brecht from Shakespeare, even more immediate was the influence of Griffith on

Ford or Hitchcock on De Palma. Without years of stage tradition to draw on, film artists have drawn on the exciting discoveries of their contemporaries. The internationalism of film distribution has always guaranteed the rapid dispersal of any significant discovery.

To keep track of this dispersal of discoveries, it is necessary to know when a particular film was released—that is, when it was first shown to a public audience—for that is usually the earliest that it could have influenced audiences and other filmmakers. This is much like learning the publication date of a novel, rather than its completion date or the number of years it took to complete. (One could date James Joyce’s *Ulysses* 1914–21, the years he wrote it, or 1921, the year he finished it; but it was first published in February 1922 and is regularly dated 1922.) In this book, the date that follows a film’s title is, in almost all cases, the year the film was *released in its country of origin*. If a film was released long after it was completed, both the completion and release dates are given. If it has become customary to refer to a particular film by the year in which most of it was shot (*Caligari*, 1919; *Breathless*, 1959), but it came out the following year, both dates are given. And both dates are given if the release date is so early in the year as to be misleading; a film released on January 8, 1929, like Dziga Vertov’s *The Man with a Movie Camera*, ought to be considered a 1928 work as well as a 1929 release. If it matters when a foreign film opened in the United States and affected American audiences, the U.S. release date is also provided; Fellini’s *La dolce vita* won a 1961 Oscar, but it came out in Italy in 1960. In any case, most films open the year they are completed and do perfectly well with one date.

The majority of film historians subscribe to a basic, if far from absolute, assumption: The very best films have generally resulted from the clear vision and unifying intelligence of a single, controlling mind with primary responsibility for the whole film. Just as there is only one conductor per orchestra, they argue, there can be only one dominant creator of a movie. The “auteur theory,” as defined by François Truffaut in France and Andrew Sarris in America, identifies the director (whose personal artistic signature is

evident in the work) as a film's "author" or dominant creator. Whether the *auteur* improvises the whole film as it goes along or works according to a preconceived and scripted plan, a single mind shapes and controls the work of film art. The difficulty with movies, however, is that their very massiveness, expense, and complexity work against their having such an *auteur*. The director is frequently no more than a mechanic, bolting together a machine (often infernal) designed by someone else.

But if many of the best movies are dominated by an *auteur*, it is also true that any movie represents an immensely collaborative venture. There are examples of very good movies with two codirectors (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, Ján Kadar and Elmar Klos). Many of the best directors work in frequent partnership with the same scriptwriter (Frank Capra with Robert Riskin, John Ford with Dudley Nichols), or the same cinematographer (Ingmar Bergman with Sven Nykvist, Sergei Eisenstein with Eduard Tisse, D. W. Griffith with Billy Bitzer), or assistant director (Truffaut with Suzanne Schiffman), or composer (Alfred Hitchcock with Bernard Herrmann, Federico Fellini with Nino Rota). Even Charles Chaplin, perhaps the most singular creator of a large body of films, worked with a single cameraman, Rollie H. Totheroh, for over three decades. To study a dozen or so films by a single screenwriter, or composer, or cinematographer would surely reveal as consistent and distinguishable a personality as a dozen or so films by a single director. And it can take hundreds of people to make a movie.

Strictly speaking, an *auteur* is a director who also writes the script and edits the film; in practice, she or he may just work closely with the writer and editor. But no commercial filmmaker works alone. And although any director has the authority and duty to make creative decisions that ensure the quality and coherence of the work, the *auteur* is a director whose work expresses a vision that develops in the course of what may appropriately be discussed as an artistic career. Not every director is an *auteur*, and some *auteurs*—like producer Val Lewton—are guiding artists in every sense of the term but are not directors. To speak of a film's *auteur*, then, is

to state a creative fact and to manipulate a useful metaphor.

Even if a vast number of movies are made outside or in opposition to the film industry, any history that intends to reveal the genesis of today's film world must acknowledge the dominant role of the industry as well as address a wealth of social and technical matters. In addition to discussing the film as art, it must deal with three related problems that have always influenced the artistic product, and continue to influence it today: the cinema as business, the cinema as cultural product and commodity, and the cinema as machinery.

Movies today are a billion-dollar business. The choice of directors, stars, and scripts is in the hands of businesspeople, not in the heads of artists. The company that invests \$30 million in a picture ought to be able to ensure the safety of its investment. When push comes to shove, commercial priorities outweigh artistic ones. The name Hollywood, for some synonymous with glamour, is for others synonymous with selling out. For decades Hollywood's commercial crassness has served American novelists—from F. Scott Fitzgerald and Nathanael West to Gore Vidal—as a metaphor for the vulgar emptiness of the American Dream. If the gifted young director today seems to face a distasteful dilemma—sell out or get out—directors have faced the same problem since the time of Griffith.

The awesome financial pressures of Hollywood are partly responsible for the growing number of independent and underground films and videos—just as Broadway production demands are responsible for the Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway theatres. Young filmmakers and video artists often prefer to work alone, their sole expenses equipment and film (or tape). These filmmakers are, in a sense, regressing to the earliest period of film history. But every artistic innovation since then has ironically necessitated spending more money. If lighting was a step forward in cinematic tone, it also required spending money on lighting equipment and on people who knew how to control it. If acting was to be improved, proven actors had to be retained. And as actors supplied greater

proofs, they demanded higher salaries. Longer films required more film, more actors, more story material, and more publicity to ensure a financial return on the greater investment. It took only 25 years for the movies to progress from cheap novelty to big business.

Why do movies cost so much to make? Put the question this way: How much would you expect to pay if you employed an army of the most specialized artisans at their trade for a period of, say, three months? Making a commercial feature film is an immense feat of social engineering; to justify the cost of that feat, the resulting movie must generate some kind of return, some social profit—financial, cultural, or both. Even in the West the movies provide an informal forum for cultural discussion, and even in the East the movies must observe the constraints of budgets and schedules. Despite the greater (and more highly publicized) cost of making movies, the theories of fiscal and cultural responsibility apply no less to the publication of a newspaper, a novel, or a scholarly journal than to films. All of them are produced for some kind of profit.

Making a film is such a massive and complex task it is a wonder that an artistically whole movie can be made at all. The huge sums of money required to finance a movie merely reflect the hugeness of the task of taking a movie from story idea to final print. Shooting is painfully slow. It takes time to perfect each setup: Lights must be carefully focused and toned, the shot's composition must be attractive and appropriate, the set must be found—or built—and dressed, background actors (extras) must be coordinated with the action of the principals, actors must have rehearsed their movements and mastered their interpretations of lines so that a single shot fits into the dramatic fabric of the whole film, make-up must be correct, costumes coordinated, and so forth. Because it takes so much time to set up a shot, producers economize by shooting all scenes together that require the same location, set, or setup, regardless of their position in the film's continuity. In other words, the film is shot "out of sequence." But even with such economies, to get three minutes of screen time "in the can" is a hard, well-organized day's work. Sometimes, on location with mammoth spectacle pictures, a

whole day can be devoted to a 15-second piece of the finished film—the sun, the caravans, the camels, the soldiers, and the gypsy maidens must be caught just as they reach their proper places. A movie's production budget is calculated on the number of days it will take to shoot, and the average expense for a color film is in excess of \$250,000 per day. Even the 10-minute student film can cost over \$1,000 for film stock and laboratory expenses alone—beyond the cost of buying or renting the equipment.

The only way to retrieve production expenses is with sales—selling tickets, leasing television rights to networks or cable franchises, selling videocassettes and laserdiscs outright.

The film artist not only is at the mercy of expensive machines and services, but also is dependent on the consent of the entertained. The history of the movies as a business is inextricably linked with the history of the movies as a mass entertainment medium. To get the public to spend its money at the box office, the producer must give the public what it wants or make the public want what it gets. History indicates that the public has gotten some of both. The crassest movie maxim is the famous, "The box office is never wrong." The validity of the maxim depends on the kinds of questions you ask the box office to answer.

Film art has changed radically in the course of its history, and so have film audiences. The first movie patrons in America were also patrons of vaudeville houses and variety shows. When those audiences tired of the same kinds of film programs, the movies found a home with lower- and working-class patrons. Small theatres sprang up in the poor sections and commercial districts of cities; admission was a nickel or dime. The rich and educated saw movies only as an afternoon or evening of slumming. As film art and craft improved, larger and more expensive movie theatres opened in the respectable entertainment centers of the cities. Films tried to appeal to a wide range of tastes and interests, much as television does today. In this period there was little consciousness of movies as an art; they were mass entertainment. And as with today's network television, the educated, the literati, and the elitists shunned them. H. L. Mencken sardonically lauded the movies as the appropriate artistic attainment of the American "booboisie." Similes

linking movies with tastelessness and movie patrons with morons continually popped up in fiction and articles of the 1920s and 1930s. Sixty years later, people like Mencken were writing film criticism, a movie actor had served as President of the United States, and going to the movies had become both intellectually respectable and socially necessary.

This discussion of the evolving audiences for movies indicates the close connection between the movies as cultural artifacts and conditions in American culture as a whole. Particular cultural conditions influence, if not dictate, the particular qualities and quantities of films in any given era. For a specific movie to become a major hit at a specific time indicates, at least partially, the cultural fact that a sufficient number of people wanted, needed, demanded, or responded to just that film then. To compare *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* of 1939, with *The Best Years of Our Lives* of 1946, with *Rebel Without a Cause* of 1955, with *The Graduate* of 1967, with *Saturday Night Fever* of 1977, with *Flashdance* of 1983, and with *Boyz n the Hood* of 1991 is to write a history of seven decades of American culture. Any history of the movies must both take account of and account for these cultural shifts and conditions.

But if movies convey an overt and explicit cultural content—a war-torn society attempting to heal its wounds in *The Best Years of Our Lives* or a working-class woman attempting to express and distinguish herself in *Flashdance*—they can also convey covert and “invisible” ideological messages. It was precisely this fear of covert ideological contamination that led to the inquiries of the House Un-American Activities Committee in the years following World War II. More recently, many contemporary film theorists, following the lead of semioticians, historians, and critics like Louis Althusser and Roland Barthes, have attempted to expose the unspoken, assumed cultural values of films—values that seem so obviously true for that culture that they are accepted as inevitable, normal, and natural rather than as constructs of the culture itself. For example, happiness in an American film is so equated with a synthesis of material comfort (home, job, car, stereo) and spiritual contentment (almost inevitably a monogamous romantic relationship) that any alternative ideas of happiness, or even a critique of the idea of happiness itself, are auto-

matically unthinkable. Television is so completely structured around commercials that the very idea of buying becomes natural; it doesn't matter exactly what it is the viewer buys, just so the viewer understands that life itself consists of buying something or other and that nearly anything can be a commodity.

This ideological analysis has been especially useful to feminist critics and theorists who seek the underlying sources of sexist thinking in our cultural history. Women in American films seem banished to the kitchen, the bedroom, or the pedestal. And whether they are cast in the cliché roles of virgin, whore, mother, wife, assistant, or boss, they are usually presented in terms of their relation to men. Feminist films define women as selves, not as enjoyable objects. But there is a sense in which any film turns its subject into spectacle. Following the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan, many feminist film theorists explicate the way in which women in movies have traditionally served as voyeuristic objects presented by male directors for the pleasurable gaze of male spectators. Although one need not accept the radical analyses and proposals of contemporary theory, there is no question that such discussions of movies have made us more conscious and self-conscious about the cultural and moral values we previously took for granted, and more wary of the ways such values are promoted.

Another radical approach to film theory suggests that our very way of looking at the world, of seeing nature, reality, and all the persons and things within it, is itself a cultural construct. The principles of Renaissance perspective—of a deep, receding space presented for the eye of the single, privileged viewer—have been ground into the lenses of cameras. Others have argued that bourgeois culture privileges a single sense—sight—over all others. The apparently innocent act of “seeing the world”—whether through our eyes or through a lens—is not at all innocent because both the seeing and the seen are cultural constructs. Hence, a final influence on the movies, important to any discussion of their history, is the dependence of film art on glass and chemicals, electricity and machines.

Appropriately enough, our technological century has produced an art that depends on technology. The first filmmakers were not artists but