

### *Characters*

- Overbearing females
- Weak males
- Heroes
- The Boss

### *What Aren't Genres*

- Documentaries
- "Classic" films
- Animated Films
- British Films

### *Screwball Comedy*



### *Personality Comedy*



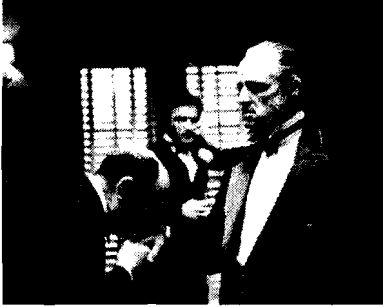
### *Sci-Fi*



### *Musical*



*Crime/Gangster*



## Westerns/Film Allegories – High Noon

### I. Comment on Some Journals

- A. Sarah Rambeau
  - 1. Comment on warm colors and lighting
- C. Claire
  - 1. Hold that thought for GoodFellas

### II. Vocabulary

- A. Diegetic Sound
  - 1. "Actual Sound"
  - 2. Sound originating in the world of the movie.
- B. Non-diegetic Sound
  - 1. Sound coming from outside the world of the movie
  - 2. Soundtrack, narrator's commentary, odd sound effects.
- C. Illustration
  - 1. End of ballad to church bells.
  - 2. What is the effect of opening with non-diegetic sound?
  - 3. Can you identify who the characters are?
  - 4. Do you mistake any of them for the narrator of the song?
  - 5. What is the significance of the churchbells?

### III. Vocabulary Review

- A. Ch. Select 16-20>Chapter 19 (Countdown)
- B. What is happening with the shots, and why?
- C. Diegetic/non-diegetic sound?

### IV. Genre Review

- A. Themes
  - 1. Doing What's Right
  - 2. Protect the Town
- B. Subject Matter/Issues
  - 1. Duty to Honor (Town)/Duty to Wife
- C. Settings
  - 1. The West (or Mexico)
  - 2. Pre-Post Civil War (Frontier Days)
  - 3. The Range
  - 4. Saloons
  - 5. Jails
- D. Mood
  - 1. Most Westerns (Spirited, uplifting)
  - 2. High Noon (cynical) revisionist
- E. Icons
  - 1. Horses, guns, spurs, liquor, shotglasses, saloon girls, virginal marm, hats, grizzled saloon dogs, tin star, honky-tonk piano
- F. Ritualistic Experience

1. Everyman article.
- G. Revisionist Western

V. Women

- A. Stereotype of weak women in Westerns.
1. Andrea's comment about women in gangster films.
- B. What examples of women in Westerns have you seen before?
- C. How do these women differ?
- D. Helen Ramirez
1. Her hidden status (the saloon, and the store)
  2. The second-rate status of the Indians.
  3. Her relationship with the three men.
  4. Do we see her as a strong woman, or one of loose morals?
  5. Is her reason for not staying valid? Or is it as flimsy as everyone else's.
- E. What's your opinion of the men of this community?
1. Justice of the Peace
  2. Sam, who makes his wife lie.
  3. Is Will Kane right?
- F. Off-screen action.
1. Did you want to see it?
  2. Would it have made the story stronger?
- G. What is the theme of this movie? The ritualistic experience?
1. The political interpretations of it.
  2. Rejection of the federal government.

## Film Noir - Chinatown

### I. *High Noon* Journal Commentary

### II. Voyeurism/Commentary on Film-Watching

- A. What is the first image we see, and what is its significance?
  - 1. Pictures that Curly is looking at.
- B. What other ways does the film make a comment about voyeurism?
  - 1. Binocular framing.
  - 2. Extended spying sequence with no dialogue.
  - 3. Viewpoint is limited to Jake's perspective.
- C. Most telling image: we see Jake watching, and what he is watching.
- D. What happens when Jake is questioned in the barbershop about his business?
  - 1. He doesn't like people peering into his life.

### III. Two Worlds

- A. When Ida Sessions brings her case to Jake, what does he tell her?
  - 1. Forget about it, let sleeping dogs lie.
  - 2. You're better off not knowing.
- B. How else is this idea of not knowing repeated in the film?
  - 1. Evelyn asks Jake to stop his investigation (she doesn't want answers).
  - 2. "You may think you know what you're dealing with, but believe me, you have no idea." - Noah Cross
  - 3. "That's what the district attorney used to tell me in Chinatown."

### C. Hidden World

- 1. Genre Characteristic
- 2. Scenes are often at night.
- 3. The Flitcraft Parable
  - a. Imagery of the construction building.
  - b. "He felt like somebody had taken the lid off life and let him look at the works."
- 4. Why is L.A. a common setting for film noirs?
  - a. It's Hollywood, where everything is a facade.
- D. "Most people never have to face the fact that at the right time and the right place, they're capable of anything."

### IV. Two Stories: Water vs. Daughter

- A. What is Cross's main goal?
- B. How do you feel about the women in this movie?
  - 1. Are there any?

### V. "Make the same mistake twice."

- A. What is the last thing we heard Hollis say?
- B. Chinatown is a ghost of Jake's past.
  - 1. Similarity to *High Noon*

C. The Flitcraft Parable

1. "Fell into step with them again."

D. Off-screen action.

E. Hopelessness/pessimism of *film noir*.

1. Dark side of the American dream.
2. Post-war pessimism, despair.

F. Chinatown!

III. *Film Noir* Characteristics

- A. Time Period - Arose (and set in the 1940's). Why?

## Auteur Studies – Breakfast Club/John Hughes

### Auteur

Talk about what an auteur is:

- Began in 1950 and 60s
- French for “Author”
- Theory that a director’s films reflect their personal creative vision, repeated from film to film
- Deeper than just directing a movie – the filmmaker is *involved* with the film
- Almost an intimate relationship – know the film inside and out, writer, producer
- Technique is learned by the Auteur, and is put to imaginative use
  - o (After Auteur theory was devised, directors were people who went to film school to learn film history – rather than people who just moved up in the studio)
- Once you learn an Auteur’s traits – stylistically, character types, themes – you should be able to see a movie and identify it as theirs – almost without knowing
- Jean Renoir said, **“A director only makes one film in his life. Then he breaks it into pieces and makes it again.”**
- Because a filmmaker is so involved – we can study them like other creative works – can be studied academically, like books or poems or music.
- Auteur theory is a way of analyzing a director’s work, based on works as a whole – analyzing the how’s and why’s. It also creates closeness to the filmmaker for the audience. Auteur theory also makes it possible for filmmakers to celebrate their medium, because they were studied and rediscovered.

### John Hughes as an Auteur

- His films defined a generation – clear when called “Classic 80’s Movies”
- Someone even mentioned – “Isn’t this a perfect 80’s movie?”
- Hughes Wrote, Directed and Produced
  - o Breakfast Club, Sixteen Candles, Ferris Bueller, and Weird Science
  - o Wrote both Weird Science and Breakfast Club in 2 days
- Some films include:
  - o Curly Sue
  - o Uncle Buck
  - o She’s Having a Baby
  - o Planes, Trains and Automobiles
  - o Ferris Bueller’s Day Off
  - o Weird Science
  - o The Breakfast Club
  - o Sixteen Candles
- Most of Hughes movies feature a scene in the library, cafeteria or both
- Shermer High School is where This movie and Weird Science take place – related to his high school which is on Shermer Road

- The last film he directed was in 1991 (Curly Sue)

Become almost like a genre, but not – but let's talk about the similarities...

- Character Types?
  - o An Athlete, A Princess, A Basket Case, A Brain, and A Criminal
  - o Principal/Authority Figure, Parents
- Settings?
  - o High Schools, Chicago (Shermer), Library, Cafeteria
- Themes?
  - o Parents – their lives are so hard
  - o Scene between Alison and Andy – similar to Jake Ryan and Sam
  - o “Everyone’s home life is unsatisfying”
  - o “Everybody can do something”
- Common Elements – things that you find in every movie like this
  - o Dancing – a Prom, or the dancing in the library
  - o Music playing a major role – often louder than the dialog
  - o How do you feel about the music – did it convey moods, overpowering?
  - o Language
    - “Outer limits,” “Wasteoid”
    - How did you feel about the language used? Appropriate? Over the top?
- Timing? One day! At Least this one was and Ferris Bueller, and more or less Sixteen Candles
  - o How did you feel about the timing?
    - Realistic? Does it make it better? Does it seem impossible?

Talk about Ritualistic Experience

- As an audience, we enjoy the “ritualistic experience,” or in other words, seeing the same types of things over and over again
- Does this movie seem to fit that bill? Why?
- Can you relate to this movie?
- Everyone has weaknesses – especially with The Breakfast Club, so many character types, everyone can relate to someone
- See what you’ve lived through played out in a movie

Let's talk about Characters...

- How do the characters in this film relate to Hughes as an auteur?
- Do they seem cliché, or over the top? Is that necessary?
- Many times he uses the same actors – but they are always relatable
  - o Molly Ringwald is approachable as both a “Princess” and as a girl from the wrong side of the tracks in Pretty in Pink, but she also is believable as the girl who was forgotten in Sixteen Candles (From the reading)
  - o Anthony Michael Hall – Plays the nerd, but turned down roles in Pretty and Pink and Ferris Bueller to not be typecast. Hughes wanted him for

every nerd. Why? All Hall's characters are based on Hughes himself ---  
that's why he wanted him!

- Ensemble Cast
  - o Different dynamic?
- Favorite Character?

Distinct Scenes – to show different things

Ending – good ending, but is all of that possible in a day? A microcosm of life – was it in them all along?

Don't You (Forget About Me) was written for the movie

## Auteur Theory

*John Hughes*

## Auteur Theory

- » Began in 50s and 60s
- » French for "Author"
- » Director's films reflect creative
- » Film technique is put to creative use



"A director only makes one film in his life. Then he breaks it into pieces and makes it again."



## Academic Study

- » Auteur theory made it possible to study film
- » Just like any other creative me
- » Analyze how's and why's



## John Hughes

- » "Classic 80's Films"
- » Writer, Director, Producer
- » Graduated from Glenbrook North High School, Northbrook, IL
- » Last film directed was *Curly Howard*



## Academy Awards Discussion

Powerpoint:

Talk about categories of Academy Awards – most prestigious

Talk about history

Major winners (most nominations/wins)

Who is the Academy?

For example – Best Picture – what would you think would be qualities?

- Big actors
- Epics
  - Titanic, Lord of the Rings
- Controversial topics
  - Crash, Brokeback Mountain
- Controversial roles
  - Gay Cowboys, murderers, gangsters (Henry Hill)
- Character Transformations
  - Tom Hanks in Castaway (nom. for Oscar, didn't win), Charlize Theron in Monster

Going along with that – why do you think this film won Best Picture?

- Up against Saving Private Ryan, The Thin Red Line, Life is Beautiful and Elizabeth
- All period pieces, 3 WWII Films, 2 Elizabethan films
- What makes this film stand out?
  - Major actors, well known story – close to Hollywood (a writer – Shakespeare)
  - Cross-dressing female, in a cross-dressing male society
- What were some advantages of this film over the others?
  - Major studios, major actors
  - More lighthearted than the others
  - Followed Romeo and Juliet – well known story
- What were some downfalls of this film?
  - Slight ridiculousness
  - Major liberties taken with the story
  - Others had much more serious themes, this film's romance could border with Romantic Comedy, not generally Oscar-worthy

Shakespeare in Love was nominated for 11 awards – Judi Dench and Gwyneth Paltrow won Best Actress, and Best Supporting Actress...

- Out of all of those nominations – Joseph Fiennes wasn't nominated.
- Why do you think that happens?
- Do you think when an actor gets snubbed like that – was he just not remarkable enough? Or just forgotten?
  - Most Best Actors are for “real life individuals” (was Shakespeare not?), mentally ill people, mental or physical disabilities, helps if

the character dies a tragic death, or is slightly eccentric (Shakespeare?!)

- He also was in Elizabeth at the same time – also nominated for Oscars – nominated for neither.
- Also, does that mean that Shakespeare in Love is not about Shakespeare? Is it about something bigger than that?

Do you ever feel like directors make movies for the Academy Awards?

- Create movies for the Academy?

Saving Private Ryan was a big production, by Steven Spielberg

- Picked for Best Director, but not Best Picture – Schindler’s List – Won Both
- Best Director – Doesn’t mean Best Film?

We’ve seen many Oscar films (list them) – how was this different?

- Goodfellas (6 noms, 1 win) (Best Supporting Actor)
- Chinatown (11 noms, 1 win) (Original Screenplay)
- High Noon (7 noms, 4 wins) (Best Actor, Editing, 2 Music)
- All these movies dealt with violence of some sort – killing
- This movie did too, but it was light hearted, romance, musical, comedic, etc.
- If you were in the Academy, what would you distinguish from the other films we’ve seen?

Also, these films had much different genres than Shakespeare in Love – what are some genres that would lend themselves to an Oscar nomination?

- Drama
- Crime
- Westerns
- Fantasy
- Usually more “serious” films

(Extras)

Nudity?

Little box office for nominees sometimes – but what about blockbuster films? Titanic, LOTR, Forest Gump?

Oddities in nominations – Juno?

This years nominations:

- Best Picture: No Country for Old Men, Michael Clayton, There Will Be Blood, Juno, Atonement
- Best Actor: Viggo Mortensen, Tommy Lee Jones, George Clooney, Johnny Depp, Daniel Day-Lewis
- Best Actress: Julie Christy, Ellen Page, Cate Blanchett, Laura Linney, Marion Cotillard

## Academy Awards

February 24, 2008

## Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

- » 6000 filmmakers
  - Most from the US
  - Open to eligible filmmakers all over world
- » All members must be invited
- » If nominated - a person becomes eligible



## Academy Awards Nominations

- » Nominations bring prestige
- » Films must open Jan-Dec of the previous year in LA
- » Academy members submit nominations in their own discipline
- » The Academy attempts to avoid biases



## Major Categories

- » Best Picture
- » Best Director
- » Best Actor
- » Best Actress
- » Best Writing/Screenplay



## Most Oscar Wins

- » 11 Oscars won
  - Ben Hur (1959)
  - Titanic (1997)
  - The Return of the King (2003)
- » Most Actor Awards
  - Katharine Hepburn (4)
- » 3 Actor Awards
  - Jack Nicholson, Ingrid Bergman, Walter Brennan



## Most Oscar Wins

- » Most Academy Awards
  - Walt Disney with 26 (22 competitive, 4 honorary)
- » Big 5 Winners
  - It Happened One Night (1934)
  - One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975)
  - The Silence of the Lambs



Academy  
Awards

February 24, 2008

## Camera Movement/Character Geography – Reservoir Dogs

### I. Off-Screen Action

- A. Show Blonde getting shot. – 59:35
  - 1. How did we get all the way from there to here?
- B. Reconstruction of the events of the heist.
  - 1. Alarm goes off.
  - 2. Mr. Blonde starts shooting everyone.
  - 3. White and Orange jump in the car with Brown, drive off.
  - 4. Pink punches through with the diamonds, escapes.
  - 5. Blonde takes a hostage and escapes.
  - 6. Brown crashes the car, dies.
  - 7. White and Orange hijack another car, Orange is shot.
  - 8. At some point, Blue is killed.
- C. Who has seen this movie before?
  - 1. Were you surprised that you never saw the heist?
  - 2. Were you surprised when the movie ended?
- D. What is the point of having so much of the story take place off-screen?
  - 1. Practical: save a lot on the budget.
  - 2. Confusion: would this story be as interesting if told linearly?
  - 3. Put us in the character space: we don't know until almost 2/3 of the way through the movie who the rat is.
  - 4. Did anyone think, until it was revealed, that there wasn't a rat?
  - 5. This movie is all about confusion, suspicion, disorientation.
- E. The ear-cutting scene.
  - 1. Show Alternate Takes 1 & 2.
  - 2. Which of these is the most disturbing/effective? Which of these is the least effective?
  - 3. Why do you think Tarantino chose to go with the take that he did?
    - a. Practical – MPAA restrictions (perhaps)
    - b. Camera as viewer (unable to bear to watch).
    - c. Force the audience to imagine the torture (much worse).
    - d. Actually showing the torture makes you look for the trick/effect, and lessens the realism/effectiveness of the scene.
- F. Conclusion on Off-Screen Action in *Reservoir Dogs*
  - 1. Done for budgetary reasons, in order to bolster the themes of confusion and disorientation, and...because you can't really know anything?

### II. You Can't Know Everything

- A. Not everything is laid out in a clear-cut manner. Some of it is hidden.
- B. Why does Mr. Orange put on a ring before he goes on the job?
  - 1. Is it part of his cover story?
  - 2. Is it a good-luck talisman?
- C. Can anyone tell what is in the back seat of the car with Orange? – Ch. 3 – 9:38
  - 1. Or did you hear what he said as they first enter the warehouse?

2. "She had a baby, man."
- D. How does Mr. Brown die?
- E. When does Mr. White tell Larry his name? Doesn't it seem like there would not be a place for such an exchange?
- F. Re-Emphasize Conclusion
  1. There is a lot going on the background as well that we either don't see, don't know, or just can never know or understand.

### III. Professionalism

- A. "It's Not Easy Being Pink."
  1. Article Recap.
  2. What is the point/effect of professionalism in the movie?
- B. Tipping Scene
  1. Is this scene just for entertainment, or is there a point to it?
  2. What is the basis for Pink's argument, and what is the basis for everyone else's arguments?
    - a. Emotion vs. Logic
  3. Mr. Pink is coldly logical (Professional), while everyone else makes emotional pleas for the waitresses.
  4. Eventually, Mr. Pink gives in and tips. (Foreshadowing)
- B. "What you're supposed to do is act like a fucking professional." - Mr. White
- C. "You're acting like a first-year fucking thief, I'm acting like a professional!" - Pink - 32:15
  1. Camera first gives White dominance and Pink submission.
  2. As Pink makes his stand, camera gives them equal footing.
- D. Each primary character dies because of a mistake they made that was a lack of professionalism: what is it for each character?
  1. Mr. Blonde
    - a. Loses his cool in the store, starts shooting everyone.
    - b. This attracts the cops, and is what makes everything go to hell.
    - c. However, he is following his own twisted logic: "If they hadn't of done what I told them not to do, they'd still be alive."
    - d. Decides to needlessly torture Marvin Nash (not even for info).
  2. Mr. Pink
    - a. Had a bad feeling from this job, right from the start (like the time he got caught buying weed), but still went through with it.
    - b. Stays at the rendezvous, even though he knows it not to be safe.
    - c. Why does he decide to stay, then?
    - d. He is following the rules, what they have agreed to do.
    - e. He survives the Mexican stand-off because he does not draw his gun (makes a plea for professionalism).
    - f. At the end, is caught because he didn't leave soon enough.
    - g. He was convinced to stay, just like he was convinced to tip.
  3. Joe Cabot

- a. He claims his mistake is going ahead when he wasn't 100% on Mr. Orange.
- b. He guarantees his death when he decides to murder Mr. Orange, even though he has a gun pointed at him.
- c. Clips of Pink and Cabot
  - i. 1:28:13 – Establishes geography of character, exclusion of Pink.
  - ii. 1:30:27 – “I know this man.” – Switch from low-angle to eye-level, Cabot loses his dominance, as he makes his poor decision, caskets are revealed – “We’re supposed to be professionals.” - Pink is not shown with the other characters.
- 4. Mr. White
  - a. He tells Orange his name and where he is from.
  - b. He acts on emotion rather than logic.
  - c. Insists on killing Cabot, even with a gun pointed at him.
  - d. Kills Orange, despite the fact there are guns pointed at him.
- 5. Mr. Orange
  - a. Is it professional when he allows Blonde/White to kill cops?
  - b. “Orange does not abandon his professionalism until the end of the film” (Weinberger). Agree/disagree?
  - c. What about when he shoots the woman?
  - d. He kills Blonde to save Marvin, which is ultimately pointless.
  - e. Killing Blonde makes him all the more suspicious.
  - f. He tells Larry he is a cop.
- 6. Show framing of Orange and White in first scene. 5:45
  - a. Up until that point, everyone is in CU single shot, and now there’s a two-shot of Orange and White.

#### IV. Love Story – Let’s Talk about Orange and White

A. What do you think about the women in *Reservoir Dogs*? How are they portrayed?

- 1. Noticeably absent.
- 2. Brutalized, killed, or discussed as sex objects, with the possible exception of Alabama.
- 3. With no women to love, men are defined by their ability/inability to love each other.

B. What happens when White carries Orange into the warehouse?

- 1. White cradles him, combs his hair, whispers into ear, and unbuckles his trousers.
- 2. This is a blunt question, but...does this seem gay? Why/why not?
  - a. Shouldn’t it seem gay? It’s a very intimate scene.

C. Music

- 1. The first mention of music is Steven Wright saying “That was the Partridge Family’s ‘Doesn’t Somebody Want to Be Wanted.’”
  - a. In a film where everyone is isolated from everyone else, some

people (Orange and White) just want to be wanted.

2. "What he wouldn't do for love, he's a fool for love," played while Orange is preparing to leave for the heist.
3. "Hooked on a Feeling." "I can't stop this feeling deep inside of me." While Pink is walking to the car.

#### D. Love

1. This is a love story between White and Orange.
2. They are undone because of their love.
3. Love makes Orange confess, and White is so heartbroken he kills Orange at the cost of his own life.

#### V. Redemption

A. Is this movie about redemption?

1. The Brintnall article compares Pink to the broken Christ body.

B. "Like a Virgin."

1. What is the point of this conversation?
2. Renewal through pain.

C. Why do people like this movie so much?

1. Redemption through pain and suffering, loving bond between men only permissible with pain and suffering.
  - a. Comparison to *Fight Club*.

D. Do you enjoy this movie?

1. "Nasty people doing nasty things."
2. Why do we like these characters? Do we? Are we rooting for them?
3. Is it because it is "cool"?

E. "Like a Virgin." Tarantino is going to shock us with things we didn't think we could be shocked with.

1. Is it significant that Tarantino delivers the "Like a Virgin" speech?

#### VI. Miscellaneous

A. Trivia: Au Revoir, Les Enfants mispronunciation is source of title.

B. Long shots used for realism (and long takes), adds to confusion in Mexican Stand-off. Use of colors in the background.

C. Pop culture.

## Cinematography and Editing – Bourne Ultimatum

### Show Tangier Doc – Rooftop Pursuit (5:30)

- Extreme stunts, flying a camera on a wire, strapping a camera to a stunt man to follow thru the window
- Think about how much work goes into that – think about how many hours go into one clip – and we don't realize it... and that's how we get things that are considered good filmmaking...
  - So in this example – was it worth it to do all that for one scene – if not – how could it have been done differently?
  - Is strapping a camera on a stunt man worth it to get a shot that only lasted 2 seconds, and could've been shot by someone on a ledge?
    - Can one stunt like that make or break a movie – does something like that make it more memorable?
  - Do the stunts seem realistic?
    - Does it matter?
    - The guy actually jumped through the window and it's entertainment regardless and they're going to do what they have to do to entertain people.

### Show Car Chase Scene

Quick Cuts – this is a good example

- When you watch a movie – do you notice the cuts being made? Or do you just follow along?
  - There are more natural styles of filmmaking, and there are jarring ways of filmmaking (Inside Man – revolving)
  - I once heard we live in a 4 second cuts generation because we get bored easily, Bourne Ultimatum has 1-2 second cuts
    - Can too many cuts ruin the scene?
      - Depends on what the audience is supposed to feel.
    - Do you ever feel like it would benefit to slow down? Do you feel like you're missing something because you're speeding by so fast?
    - Is this where we're heading? Is this something that's considered "good"?
    - Do filmmakers have a duty to preserve "good filmmaking?"  
Slowed down...
    - We're too impatient
  - No chance to appreciate it.

Tracking Shots - Opposite

- Some movies use long tracking shots that are MINUTES long (Atonement, Children of Men, Goodfellas) –
  - Somewhat the opposite of these films – why would long tracking shots be so revered?

- Just as much going on as a very cut up scene – but it’s more dramatic and more fluid.
- People who know nothing about film can respect the work that went into it.
- Short cuts are so commonplace – that anything over 30 seconds draws your attention
- If you’re shooting a scene with many cuts – you have to shoot so many different angles and you have to get so much footage to make the cuts, and the tracking shots take more choreography and coordination but -
- Which do you think is more challenging for a filmmaker?
  - The Atonement article – The long shot had to be done out of necessity. So tracking shot takes more skill from the talent, but many angles and cuts allows the actors to mess up – but could take all day.

### Moving Camera

- Is the constantly moving camera effective?
  - Creates nervous energy...
  - Do you like it? Or do you get sick of it after awhile?
  - Would it be better to stabilize in more emotional scenes, or scenes without Bourne? Or during the CIA meetings?
  - Overkill?

### Formalism vs. Realism

- Realism – the filmmakers disappear
- Formalism – attention is drawn to the filmmakers

We’ve talked about cuts in the film and some camera work, so...

### Cinema Vérité – True Cinema

- Began in the 60s with French filmmakers, combines naturalistic techniques, originated from documentary filmmaking – uses camerawork and editing and uses the camera to provoke subjects – function of Realism, “These realistic traditions are aimed at showing man’s real situation in life”
- One critic said that the Bourne movies were shot in Cinema Vérité style – not actually Cinema Vérité, but similar – other examples would be The Office, Friday Night Lights, and The Real World (documentary)
- Real Cinema Vérité uses unobtrusive cameras and real people – Bourne movies are shot to look as though it’s not staged and use crazy angles (Scene with Nikki and Bourne – the camera can’t get a good angle – we only see their eyes) – we talked about moving cameras already...
  - So – if Cinema Vérité relates to Realism, and we’re noticing the camera cuts and movements
    - Is this actually Realism or Formalism?
      - Formalism masquerading a Realism – they want you to get lost in it, but you’re still noticing it.

## Plot – an Entertainment Issue

- This movie relies heavily on cinematography and editing (So much so that it won 3 academy awards for Editing, Sound Editing, and Sound Mixing and wouldn't get nominated for anything else), but it seems to lack a plot
  - Does a movie need a solid plot to be good?
  - Is that okay? Is it just about entertainment and action?
    - Yes – we need those kinds of films.
  - Bourne Identity DP is the same as Jumper – do we forgive bad plot/no plot for good action and effects?
  - It seems as if its not even necessary – as long as it's entertaining, you're always on the edge of the seat
- The films are constructed in a way that you don't even have to see the other films to be involved
  - What does that mean for the audience?
    - You're never concerned for his character - or wonder what he's going to do next
    - How many awesome stunts there will be
    - People are satisfied – they don't want more
  - Does it matter if you see movies out of order? Is that good filmmaking?
    - Bond Movies – doesn't matter what happened before, or if there's even the same Bond

## Other Questions:

Fast paced – how does it make you feel? Do you think it's necessary to make it like that?

- What's the point of having all the movies have such quick pace?
  - Erratic Zooms
  - Amnesia
  - Paranoia
    - Editing keeps us uncomfortable, like Bourne
  - Action
- Is it necessary to make it like that?
- How do you feel about the flashbacks?
  - Somewhat like dream sequences – were they effective in their placement and what they looked like?
- How did the audio play into this film?
  - The sub was always on, and there was some sort of score the entire time, until the end – Paz has his gun on him and it's overwhelmingly quiet.

## Review:

### Shaky Berlin

"I'd like to get one big complaint off my chest. Why do some filmmakers today seem to think that bad home-movie camerawork is cool? Yes, I understand the whole amnesia, disorientation theme in the Bourne films. But director Paul Greengrass and cinematographer Oliver Wood overdo it to the point that many Berlin scenes might as

well have been shot on a Hollywood studio set, for all we see of the German capital city in Supremacy. The frenetic, shaky-camera photography/editing zooms through Berlin like a ricocheting bullet. Sometimes we filmgoers would actually like to SEE what's going on and have a sense of place, not get just a brief glimpse or impression.”

## Literary Adaptations – Catch-22

- I. Why do studios do adaptations? What is the attraction?
  - A. Built-in audience base
  - B. Name recognition.
  - C. Established story quality. They don't have to come up with their own good story.
- II. What are some of the problems with adapting a story that is a classic in its field?
  - A. Built-in audience backlash.
    1. What are some of your favorite books that have been adapted poorly?
      - a. What was wrong with them?
    2. Favorite parts left out, characters changed.
  - B. Bela Balazs
    1. Adapting masterpieces often disappoints because "a masterpiece is a work whose subject ideally suits its medium. Any transformation of this work will inevitably produce a less satisfactory result."
    2. Advocates finding mediocre source material that have "within them the possibility of cinematic transformation."
- III. You don't have to read the whole thing, I think you can get the point from the photographs."
  - A. How does the message of the movie differ from that of the novel? Does it?
  - B. In the book, Yossarian receives a medal for flying over Ferrara a second time to bomb it. In the movie, it is to cover up the fact that they bombed the sea.
    1. How does this change of events change the meaning of the medal?
      - a. In the book, Yossarian is awarded for being brave in the traditional military sense.
      - b. In the movie, Yo is awarded for bravely refusing to take orders.
      - c. Does it show a character change? In the movie, we never see Yossarian proudly serving.
  - C. Difference in the McWatt/Hungry Joe/Kid Sampson scene.
    1. We don't know who these characters are, how can we be affected by their deaths?
    2. The other characters also seem strangely passive/indifferent.
    3. The frantic action on the beach is all gone.
  - D. Snowden's secret.
    1. What is Snowden's secret?
    2. Is this message conveyed in the movie? Or is it just a gross scene?
  - E. How does the overall tone of the two works differ?
- IV. Style Choices
  1. How does the opening of the book differ from the opening of the movie?
    - a. How does this foreshadow the tone of each work?
  2. Our discussion last week of long takes...how does that apply to *Catch-22*?
    - a. Is this an appropriate stylistic choice for the material?
    - b. Does it match with the style of the book?

3. What of the mess hall scene? Is this a faithful representation of the material?

V. How should a novel be adapted? What must it do to be satisfying?

A. Bela Balazs

1. "The filmmaker who delves into another artwork for his subject matter does nothing wrong so long as he tries to reshape it via the form-language of cinema"

B. Andre Bazin

1. "If the purpose of this genre or form of film is to retain that very special reality of the original masterpiece, then cinema must employ none of its own formative plastic tricks; it must let the original shine through as purely as possible"

2. "urged that filmmakers forget their precious form-language and put themselves at the service of the masterpieces they want to bring to the screen"

C. What is the responsibility of a movie adaptation?

1. Is it to faithfully translate the story to screen?

2. Or is it to take the original and to create something new out of it?

3. How much freedom does the filmmaker have? How much freedom should the filmmaker have?

a. Harry Potter

D. Ultimately, whatever tricks it employs, an adaptation must be able to stand on its own.

VI. Siegfried Kracauer's views on Adaptation

A. "Adaptations make sense only when the content of the novel is firmly rooted in objective reality, not in mental or spiritual experience."

B. "A novel whose primary movement occurs within a character...is doomed at the outset of the adaptation enterprise. The filmmaker can render only the world...not his complex emotional reactions to it."

C. "For Kracauer, the cinema is first and always a visual medium, and such Introspective voice-over techniques are an admission of the failure of the Visual imagination or of the impropriety of the subject matter."

D. I hardly ever see book adaptations without voiceovers of some kind.

-Marggy Griffin

E. Would *Catch-22* have benefited from a voice-over?

1. Or would this have been a failure of the imagination?

2. Does the fact that it seems to need a VO show that it is not suitable for adapting?

VII. The Final Point

A. What, ultimately, should we expect from adaptations?

B. Well?

C. Are adaptations a good idea? Do we need to just revamp our conceptions?

D. Does *Catch-22* work as an adaptation?

E. Does it work on its own as a movie?

## Personality Comedy - Zoolander

Show Great Dictator Clip

Show Duck Soup Clip

- Country is going bankrupt – a dictator (Rufus Firefly) is appointed to run the country while Mrs. Teasdale, a wealthy woman foots the bill. Eventually two countries go to the brink of war, all the while – Firefly is trying to get Teasdale's money.
- Famous mirror scene

In personality comedy –

- The entire film revolves around a central character or characters
- Usually features a loose (at best) plot, which is often meaningless, wacky, silly or ridiculous.
- They also take place in contemporary times, and often touch on current themes – like the Great Dictator.

One of the main components of personality comedy is shtick, shtick being something that the comedian does as a character. On SNL – an actor might have different shticks for multiple characters – so you can tell the difference.

- What are some of the shticks by the comedians that we've seen – be it from Zoolander or Chaplin or the Marx Brothers?

Personality comedies often use over-the-top physical and verbal comedy while addressing “important” issues – from sweatshops, funerals, and bulimia in Zoolander – to dictatorship and a world war in the Great Dictator. The comedians are often incompetent, and/or incapable of doing anything for themselves – so why do we watch these comedians? It's hard to relate to them because they're so abnormal – so why are they so prominent? Why are they so funny?

- They talk about issues that are inappropriate to laugh at, but they make us feel like we can relax and laugh at them.
- Things everyone knows about, or has an opinion about

A film's success has a lot to do with when it's released, and it can either be well received, or not if major events are happening.

- Duck Soup was released during the Great Depression and people didn't appreciate it's political disregard and cynicism, even though the Marx Brothers were popular
- Zoolander was one of the first films after September 11, especially a comedy, and wasn't well received either
- The Great Dictator was a major hit when it came out in the middle of WWII, and Britain showed it as a morale booster against the Germans
- Films can be a form of escapism, so why do you think this was the case for any of these films?
- What do you think the impact of a film satirizing another country vs. our own has to do with anything?

Chaplin mocked the Nazis, but later he said that he wouldn't have made it if all the Nazi horrors had been known. As for current issues - Team America is a ridiculous example - but it pokes fun at Kim Jong Il and other world leaders, and SNL pokes fun at these issues every week

- But do you think there would ever be a time for a comedy about current issues like the war in Iraq, or is that just something that has to be respected?
- When is it appropriate to discuss these issues, and when is it not? When is it okay for comedians to take these issues and change them around to be funny?
  - There are certain things that have to remain serious
  - Great Dictator was about the enemy - not something on the home front
  - There has to be a balance - maybe in WWII there wasn't enough comedy - today we have too much, we have enough topics to joke about

If a movie were made about a current topic, like the war in Iraq,

- At the time, major hit - Comedy (films in general) is a form of escapism from things going on in the world and Zoolander didn't do as well right after September 11...
- Why? Is it because we actually knew what really happened right away - and we couldn't laugh?
- People weren't ready
- It was too ridiculous?
- Didn't do very well because it came out 2 weeks after Sept. 11 - despite being loaded with famous actors, celebrities - and Ben Stiller, Owen Wilson, and Will Ferrell - which these days seem to get a lot of attention
  - In Oliver Stone's trailer for *World Trade Center* - you can see a Zoolander poster in the background
  - Got a good rating on Rotten Tomatoes - got good critic reviews
  - Could you see a comedy about our current situation in the world? Iraq war, or other horrible things like September 11? Is it too soon? Could anyone be brave enough - would it be successful?

How serious are these comedians taken?

- Historically, do you think people viewed Marx Brothers, Chaplin like we view modern comedians?
- For any genre that you enjoy, do you think it's important for people who enjoy current versions - to go back to the roots? Comedians these days may be seen as silly, but there are definite counterparts in past generations.

Are there any personality comedians that have the sticking power of the Marx Brothers and Charlie Chaplin - or are we at a point where anyone can be a comedian, and no one sticks out?

Even though we haven't watched these films in entirety – what are some ways that you think comedy has changed – and comedians, since these films were released?

- Topics
- Things are more sexual, rather than visual comedy and just verbal comedy

Many times comedic actors – especially personality comedians, who play the same character over and over, don't do well in serious roles – why do you think that is? Do you think they are typecast?

- People only view them as those characters – makes other characters unbelievable
- Do people not believe they will be good in that role and just don't go to the movies, or are we just unimpressed with their seriousness?
- Should we give them more of a chance?
  - Stranger than Fiction with Will Ferrell – he was good
  - Eternal Sunshine – Jim Carrey
  - Some have success – some not so much, when the film doesn't revolve around them

Often comedies have current events - do you think that filmmakers/scriptwriters put those issues in their films to draw attention to the subject?

Satire – Blowing up the ridiculousness of the entertainment industry – everyone knows everyone, and you have to do something big and be different to really be noticed or count, everyone lives a life of excess.

## Student Films – Ellie & Marianne

### I. Technical Explanation (What We Take for Granted)

#### A. Automated Dialogue Replacement (ADR)

- a. Dubbing or “looping”
  - i. So named for the fact that you loop over the same dialogue spot again and again.
- b. Replaces location sound that is unusable for one reason or another.
- c. Actor must recreate the performance they already gave.

#### B. Foley Effects/Foley Editing

- a. If you replace dialogue, that also means you have to replace all the other sounds in the scene.
- b. Jack Foley was working for Universal Pictures during the time of transition of silent to sound.
- c. Foley pioneered the recording of individual sound effects.
  - i. Sound effects could be created with items other than what they were representing on screen.
  - ii. In a famous example, Foley could take two canes and while walking by himself, make it sound like three people.
  - iii. Directors learned that the recreation of scenes for audio was unnecessary.
  - iv. Wooden chairs could simulate creaking floors.
- d. If it moves, it has to have sound.
  - i. Clothes rustling. You hear it if it’s not there.
- e. Example of the clock.
- f. Recordists are called Foley Artists, because it is a craft.

#### C. Sound Editing/Sound Mixing

- a. Sound Editing is the recording of effects, dialogue, and music (the individual components).
- b. Sound Mixing is putting all of those elements together and making sure they are balanced correctly.
  - i. Obviously, that is not always done well.

#### D. Color Timing (Correction)

- a. What you shoot is not necessarily what you will see on screen.
- b. Through the process of color timing or color correction, the image is manipulated for various reasons.
  - i. Balance out the hues in individual shots.
  - ii. Provide continuity between shots if lighting couldn’t be matched.
  - iii. Evoke a general mood for a scene that wasn’t accomplished in shooting.
- c. Process was originally done in labs by actually treating the film with chemicals.
- e. Now is done mostly digitally.

#### E. Compositing

- a. The process by which one shot is superimposed onto another,

- combining various elements into one uniform shot.
      - i. Composite shot.
  - b. Blue/green screen work is an excellent example of compositing.
    - i. Sin City, Sky Captain, Star Wars
  - c. Most compositing is done digitally, but it used to be done physically.
  - d. Either in-camera (Double exposure) or in the lab.
  - e. One common form of compositing that you are not supposed to notice is sky replacement.
    - i. You can see when it is done badly.
    - ii. Or when it is not done and should have been.
- F. Director
  - a. The principal creative artist of the movie.
  - b. Responsible for telling the story of the movie.
- G. Assistant Director
  - a. Breaks down the script to create a shooting schedule.
  - b. Manages time on set to make sure everything gets accomplished.
  - c. Makes sure all safety and legal requirements are being followed.
- H. Director of Photography
  - a. Responsible for implementing and creating the director's vision.
  - b. Designs the lighting scheme, chooses film stock (for a particular look), chooses lenses plans.
  - c. May operate the camera, or may have someone else.
- I. Gaffer
  - a. Head of the electrical department, responsible the lighting design and execution.
  - b. Works with the DP for lighting design.
  - c. Best Boy
    - i. Chief assistant to the Gaffer
    - ii. Manages the people and equipment.
- J. Post-Production Supervisor
  - a. Manages all aspects of post-production, ensuring that the director's vision is implemented and that the movie is finished on time.

## II. Why Is This Movie So Bad?

- A. It's easy to say that this movie is laughable. But why?
- B. What is this movie about?
  - a. What is the setting? Where does Marianne start out?
    - i. What is the effect of the numerous establishing shots?
  - b. Tell me about the characters.
    - i. What are their personalities/wants/needs?
    - ii. How have the characters changed by the end of the movie?
  - c. Official Summary of the Movie:
    - i. Ellie's life was orderly, predictable, and controlled until Marianne, her passionate sister with a zest for life came to visit. Ellie is driven by her work and has little time for a personal life.

An actress between jobs and headed to L.A., Marianne stops in the midwest to visit her sister Ellie. Marianne is an artist who believes in living a passionate, romance-filled life. Living together, the two sisters learn to appreciate the other's viewpoint and arrive at a middle ground while experiencing love and loss. Together, they learn that somewhere between the fairy tale and tragedy lies reality-- a world that requires each of them to become more like the other in order to find happiness.

- d. How does the summary of the movie differ from what you see?
- C. Who is telling this story?
- a. 3 Directors are listed.
  - b. Post-Production Director is credited.
  - c. What is the reason?
  - d. The Director was fired because of a lack of preparation.
  - e. The DP took over for the shoot, and then the AD for post.
  - f. Looking at their job titles, are the DP and the AD suited for this job?
  - g. What effect would all of this have on the story?

### III. *Ellie and Marianne* as Romantic Comedy Genre

- A. What are some of the elements that make this a romantic comedy?
  - a. The "Meet Cute" (Roger Ebert-coined term)
  - b. The Free Spirit and the Responsible Individual
  - c. Marianne's False Perfect Guy, and the Good Guy Waiting in the Wings
  - d. The Crisis with Ellie's Perfect Guy, and its resolution.
  - e. The light-hearted tone and the neat-as-a-bow resolution.
  - f. The colorful and quirky supporting characters.
- B. Do the characters fit the necessary look for their roles?
  - a. Edward as a cybervillain?
  - b. Ellie inappropriately dressed for her character at the bar?
- C. Small-Talk
  - a. Compare "Tipping/Like a Virgin" to "Space Shuttle"
    - i. We had a discussion over whether or not there was a point to the "Tipping/Virgin" conversations. What is the difference between that small talk and the small talk in this movie?

### IV. The World of this Movie

- A. Return to the question: are these actors old enough to play these characters?

How old are these characters?

  - b. Marianne is mentioned to be 24. How old is Ellie?
  - c. Does anyone recognize the house belonging to this couple?
    - i. Do they belong in President Gora's mansion?
- D. What are the problems with the casting of this movie?
  - a. Reverse "Children of Men"

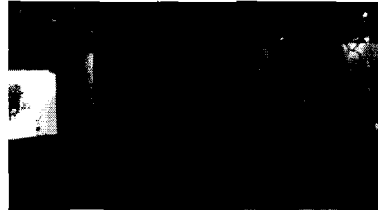
- i. No one is younger or older than mid-20's except for the crazy old lady.
    - ii. Even the crazy old lady is made to act like she is in her 20's.
- C. Lived-In World
  - a. Compare the Bar Scene vs. the Street Scene and Coffee Shop
    - i. SAG Day Rate for an Extra is \$126 (rates vary)
    - ii. Shoot a movie in the middle of a work day with no budget, where are you going to get extras?
  - b. The Theatre
    - i. No actors.
    - ii. No sets.
    - iii. It is the small details that betray a film world as false.
- D. In the opening five minutes of the movie, we have two tonal switches pulled on us.
  - a. The fake death scene and the horror scene.
  - b. What is the effect of this misdirection?
  - c. Is it wise to betray the audiences expectations so many times so soon?
  
- V. Show, Don't Tell
  - a. How is the exposition handled in this movie?
  - b. Typical scene set-up.
    - i. Let me ask you a question about what you've been doing.
    - ii. You tell me what you've been doing.
  
- VI. Miscellaneous
  - a. Her art?
  
- VII. You Make Movies in the Real World
  - a. Who is to blame? The director? The scriptwriter? The actors?
  - b. Who is to blame for bad performances: actors or director?
  - c. What you saw was what premiered.
  - d. Movies are an art form and a business. Deadlines have to be met, so sometimes quality has to suffer.
  - e. If you don't have a budget, you have to cut things somewhere (extras, art direction, quality).
  - f. Hopefully, this has helped you learn how to break down why a movie fails, and why it makes you laugh.
  - g. Also, hopefully you see and appreciate elements of the process that you weren't aware of before.

## *Ellie & Marianne*

Making Movies  
In the Real World

## Automated Dialogue Replacement (ADR)

- "Looping"
- Audio Dubbing



## Foley Effects/Editing

- Jack Foley



JACK FOLEY

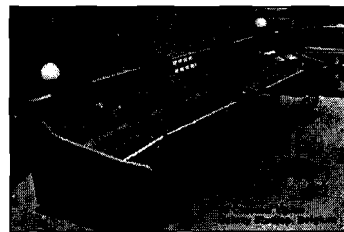
## Foley Effects/Editing



## Sound Editing



## Sound Mixing



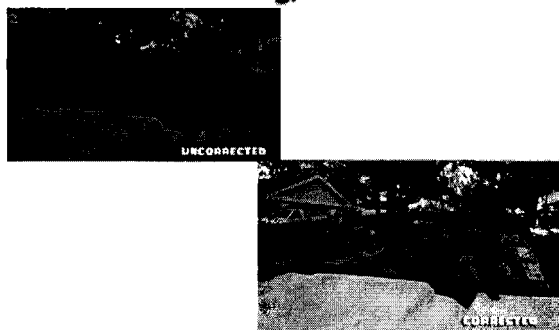
### Color Timing/Correction

- Balance Hues
- Color Continuity
- Provide Mood

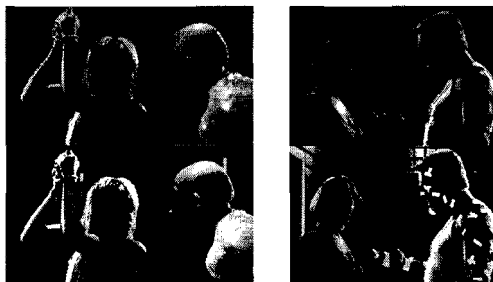
### Color Timing/Correction



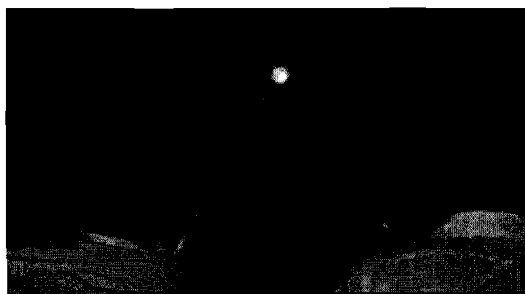
### Color Timing/Correction



### Compositing



### Sky Replacement



### Sky Replacement



### Director

- Main creative artist of the movie.
- Responsible for telling the story of the movie.

### Assistant Director

- Breaks down the script.
- Creates a shooting schedule.
- Manages time on set.
- Manages on-set safety/regulations.

### Director of Photography

- Responsible for creating and implementing the director's vision.
- Designs lighting scheme, chooses film stocks, lenses.
- May or may not run camera.

### Gaffer

- Head of the electrical department.
- Responsible for lighting design and execution.
- Works with DP.
- Chief assistant is the Best Boy.

### Post-Production Supervisor

- Manages all aspects of post-production.
- Ensures the director's vision is implemented.
- Ensures the movie is finished on time.

### Why is this movie so bad?

### Why is this movie so bad?

- What is this movie about?

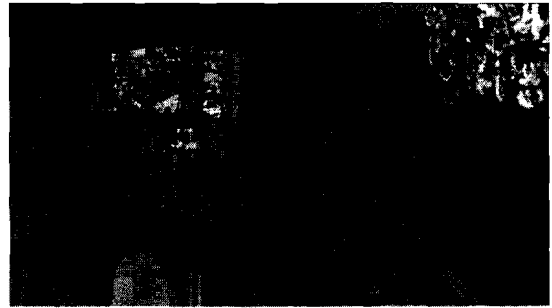
### Why is this movie so bad?

- Ellie's life was orderly, predictable, and controlled until Marianne, her passionate sister with a zest for life came to visit. Ellie is driven by her work and has little time for a personal life.
- An actress between jobs and headed to L.A., Marianne stops in the midwest to visit her sister Ellie. Marianne is an artist who believes in living a passionate, romance-filled life. Living together, the two sisters learn to appreciate the other's viewpoint and arrive at a middle ground while experiencing love and loss. Together, they learn that somewhere between the fairy tale and tragedy lies reality-- a world that requires each of them to become more like the other in order to find happiness.

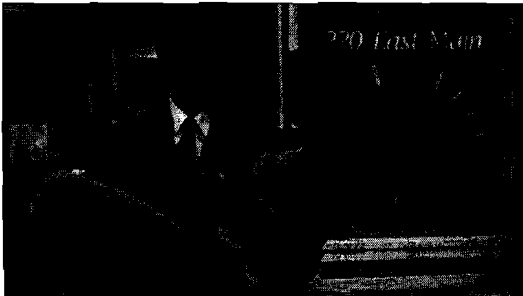
### Romantic Comedy

- What elements of the genre are represented?

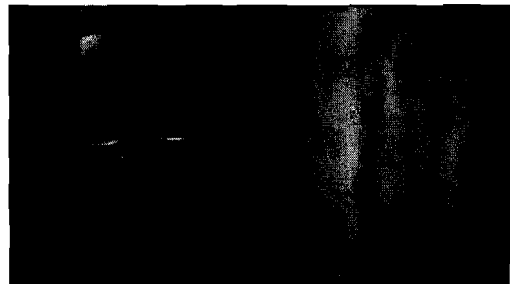
### "Meet Cute"



### "Meet Cute"



### Do the Characters Look Right?



Do the Characters Look Right?



Do the Characters Look Right?



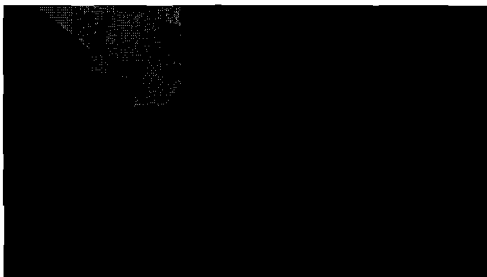
Do the Characters Look Right?



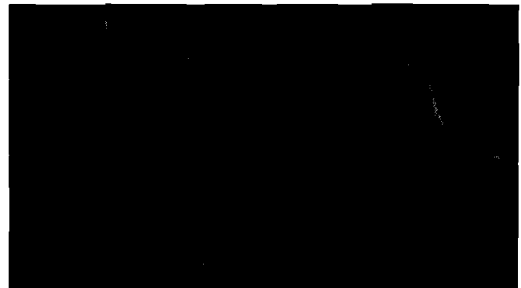
Small-Talk



The World of the Movie



The World of the Movie



**The World of the Movie**



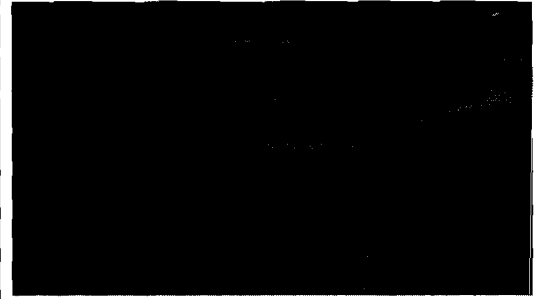
**Tonal Switches**



**Tonal Switches**



**Realism**



***Ellie and Marianne***

- ◆ You make movies in the real world.

## Foreign Film – Pan’s Labyrinth

### Foreign Film

- Someone had some complaints about watching a film with subtitles...
  - o Are there preconceived notions about foreign films, or biases against them?
- What are some of the inherent issues with making foreign films ready for other languages?
  - o Translation – things don’t mean the same
  - o Dubbing – laughable and distracting
  - o Subtitles – never correct
    - Del Toro did his own subtitles, because he wanted it to be true

What were you’re initial reactions?

### Color Schemes

- What are some of the main colors in this film?
  - o Grays, reds, browns and earth tones
- What do they signify?
  - o Fascist world – Grays
  - o Ofelia’s world – Reds
  - o The woods and the Rebels – Earth tones
- Why such a great difference even in the same scene?
  - o Signifies the difference and the line between the two worlds

How does this work as a fairy tale?

- “What happens when make-believe believes it’s real?” IMDB
- “Innocence has a power evil cannot imagine.” IMDB
- Magic Book
- Magic Mirror
- Evil Step-Father
- The sick/dying/dead real parent
- Rite of passage
- The Woods

There are several places in this film -

What is the significance of the woods?

- Place of refuge
- Ofelia can live out her fantasies there and can find refuge
- The Rebels can hide there
- The Fascists can’t win in the woods
- A message, historically, to warn children from straying from the path

Obviously very violent – how does that match up against the fantasy/fairy tale world?

- How do you feel about the violence in the film?
- What’s the purpose?

- To show how really terrible Vidal and his regime are?
- To highlight the extreme realism versus the fantasy

#### War Movie?

- Movies can be political, but are usually preachy – is this?
- Some took this to be about the Iraq War, but Del Toro sees it as about Spain
- What happens when the director makes a film and people take it a different way
  - Are people wrong?
  - Is that okay?

#### Interpret the Tests

- Retrieve the key from the stomach of the frog that eats everything
- Get the dagger from the Pale Man, without eating anything
- Sacrifice yourself instead of someone else
- Classic element of Fairy Tales

#### Pattern of Threes

- Three women
- Three soldiers (Vidal and his men)
- Three fairies
- Three tasks

#### Characters in the real world have counterparts in the fantasy –

- Who are the matched up characters?
  - Pale Man's feast and the Fascist's feast
  - Pan and Mercedes? Somewhat of leaders and enablers
  - The two parents – Moanna's father and Ofelia's mother

#### Is there hope in this film?

#### There are many sounds that are louder than normal in this film – what is the significance?

- Vidal's glove
- Vidal's razor
- Creaking of the floors
- Adds to the realism of the "real world"

#### Which is the real world?

#### The fantasy world is to be as violent and scary as the real world

#### She is reborn at the end of the movie, she goes back into her mothers womb to be reborn

- Everything is maternal

Kevin Miller  
Genre Paper  
February 28, 2008

Gangster movies have been some of the most popular masculine movie genres throughout the history of film. These movies started in the 1920's, gained popularity in the 30's, and have been re-designed and re-created ever since. A movie that is put into the gangster genre usually focuses on the life of a mobster, their crime, or their victim. Early films of this genre often portrayed the criminally reckless mobsters during the 1920's and the crimes that they commit, while more modern gangster flicks focus on the mobsters themselves and their relationships with their partners and nemeses. Both the early and the modern gangster films are often set in big cities and involve many types of violence. Powerful guns and silent knives often lead to bloody killings in these movies. And often these gangsters meet their untimely end through the same weapons that they use to kill. The gangster genre often tells a story that glorifies the mobster and the crime, but will also show that there are consequences for living the dangerous life.

Three movies really seemed to start the whole genre of gangster movies. "Little Caesar" (1930), "The Public Enemy" (1931), and "Scarface" (1932) introduced movies to the classic gangster. They showcased all of the imagery that the genre is associated: racketeers, gangster's women, straight and corrupt cops, crusading district attorneys, square hats and coats, firearms, and automobiles.<sup>1</sup> Most people say that these movies set the stage for the rest of the early gangster films. Many of the other movies are just considered copies of these two films. Gangster films were very popular in the 30's; however, there were only three main actors for these movies. James Cagney, Edward Robinson, and Humphrey Bogart portrayed most of the mobsters during this period.

These movies were so popular during the depression era because people responded well to the violence and action in these films. These men were breaking the rules and creating a new lifestyle in which they were able to take anything they needed. These characters were admired by the average citizen because they got away with the things that everyone wanted to do. In these movies the gangsters dressed nicely and their dress often reflected their status. When characters were promoted in the mob they were often seen getting new clothes and improving their style. Also, the automobiles featured in the films are new, fast, and shiny. Many people that went to movies in this era did not afford automobiles, especially the faster, newer models. This wealth and power that is achieved through cheating, stealing, and breaking the law is immortalized by these characters. However, most of the early films from this genre have very similar endings. These movies often portrayed the rise and the fall of the gangster. They are always shown in their prime, and they are always brought down; either through incarceration or death. At the end of the early gangster movies, the mobster is rarely glorified. Also, some of these movies were made to have disclaimers at the beginning stating that they were not intended to promote a lifestyle of crime. “Scarface” was one of these ultra-violent movies. It was the first movie in which the gangsters used machine guns and had one of the highest death-rates at 28 people killed. In 1934 the Hayes Production Code was developed to censor many scenes of violence and a positive image of criminals.<sup>2</sup> Therefore many movies later in the decade focused more on characters that fought against these gangsters.

Many of the gangster films that were released soon after “Little Caesar”, “The Public Enemy”, and “Scarface” could not compare to these classics. The story lines

became old and the characters became overused.<sup>2</sup> Because of this, in the 1940's through the 1960's, the gangster genre was in a decline.

During the 1940's, 50's and early 60's, there were many movies made under the crime genre, but not many of them involved characters that could be considered gangsters. It was not until "Bonnie and Clyde" (1967) that the ultra violent gangster movies were reborn.<sup>3</sup> "Bonnie and Clyde" is the first of the modern gangster movies. These movies focus more on the criminal and not the crime and are often based on real people and stories. Compared to the early films, the modern gangster movies are much more violent mainly because of the looser censorship regulations. "Bonnie and Clyde" brought back the appeal of the depression era outlaw and the appeal of most audiences back to the gangster genre. However, it did not re-invent the gangster. This was not done until the release of "The Godfather" (1972). Francis Ford Coppola projected the gangster as a "tragically conflicted man – fiercely loyal to his family and friends, yet guilty and shame-ridden over the nature of his business."<sup>3</sup> He created a soft spoken gangster who commanded respect by giving respect. He is feared, but never really acts like a crazed blood-thirsty gangster like the early movie characters. In "The Godfather", Coppola created a new American icon similar to the western cowboy. This movie ushered in the new era of the gangster drama.<sup>4</sup> There was no more clear cut good vs. evil plot, and the new mobsters did not always get punished, through jail or death, because of their criminal activities. The upper level gangsters are portrayed more as business men than mobsters.<sup>4</sup> The "Godfather" movies are portrayed from the aspect of the leaders of the gang, whereas other gangster movies in the 90's begin to portray members of the mafia that are working their way up the system.<sup>5</sup> In "Goodfella's", the main characters

are men who are looking to move up in the mafia family. It is one of the first movies that details how one member begins to become a member of the mob. It also puts an emphasis on loyalty to the mafia family over your real family. This movie, like many gangster films in this time period is based on the lives and actions of actual people. "Dillenger" (1973) is based on the life of John Dillenger; "The Untouchables" (1987) is based on the arrest of Al Capone; "Bugsy" (1991), "Hoffa" (1992), and "American Gangster" are based on the lives of former mobsters. Other movies that are based on true events are "Casino" (1995) and "Donnie Brasco" (1997). These true stories are almost too incredible to believe, and although some artistic license has been taken, these movies have a lot of fact to them.

Although the idea of the gangster has changed somewhat throughout the years, the genre's motifs have stayed pretty consistent. The hero gangster is usually an immigrant (often Italian) who wants to create a new life for himself and separate themselves above society. No one helps the gangster from outside the mafia; they can only gain power by taking it for themselves. The only laws they abide by are loyalty and survival of the fittest. The antagonist is always society. The gangster is cheating everyone else, and the police represent the rest of society trying to tame the mobster. Success is only measured in material goods such as fancy clothes, fast cars, and powerful weapons. And in almost every gangster movie, the end justifies the means. The hero is often killed (by the police or other rival gangsters) or incarcerated because of his crimes. One thing that helps make this genre great is that a gangster film can be seen through many perspectives: the main boss, a soldier moving his way up, the undercover agent working with the mafia, and the district attorney trying to build a case to prosecute the

mobster. No matter what perspective the film is from, if it contains the necessary motifs, themes, and icons then it can be considered a part of the gangster genre.

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Honors 390H – Talking About Movies

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### **Adventure Films**

Few movie genres produce film after film of incredibly entertaining, edge of your seat, intellectually stimulating, and gender/age appreciated movies like those of the adventure film genre. Tim Dirks, of Filmsite.org, defines adventure as “exciting stories, with new experiences or exotic locales, very similar to or often paired with the action film genre.” The overlap in genres that filmsite.org identifies with adventure films is very important. Action, sci-fi, comedy and historical genres can also describe some adventure movies and they can be part of the “chick flick” or disaster sub-genres, as well. There is no tried and true definition of adventure films because they can be combined with so many other genres. However, the important thing is that the movie portrays a quest which the viewer can live through the travels, struggles, conquests, and explorations of the hero, while containing, but not relying solely on, action sequences (Dirks).

These movies are often set in glamorous locations and have no shortage of location changes, often covering vast distances of the globe or country in a single scene transition. Most often they take place in jungles, deserts, exotic islands, or foreign countries. More specifically, scenes take place in ancient buildings, churches, pyramids, temples, and other rich historical locations. These scenes draw the audience into the film because they are places people long to visit, yet most likely never will. The films are also often set in time periods of historical significance and portray literary heroes or adapted biblical stories (Dirks).

The standard theme of adventure films is the triumph of good over evil, often in the recovery of a stolen artifact or vast amount of wealth. Film historian, Brian Taves describes adventure heroes as such:

“The hero is usually attractive, endowed with personal magnetism, ardent in romance, a natural leader with worthy goals and a sense of duty to a country or cause. While enjoying existence to the fullest, their life is also serious, he is politically motivated, patriotic, selflessly dedicated to justice, pure of purpose, honorable, fair, chivalrous, and peace loving, only killing the most dangerous of villains.” (Taves 112)

This description is one reason why the adventure hero is one of the most likable characters in cinema and the mood of these films is usually very optimistic, on the part of the hero. Perhaps the most recognizable icon in adventure movies is the map, whether it is a traditional map, series of clues, or simply a story either passed down through family or theology. Guns are also used, but most often only by the villain, because the hero is often too moralistic to need a gun.

Adventure movies have intrigued audiences for a long time, from *The Ten Commandments* and *Robin Hood* to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *National Treasure* and *The Da Vinci Code*. The visual effects and action sequences may change with time, becoming more and more complex, but the story lines of these movies remain linked. As an audience, we will forever be intrigued by the stories of unfound treasure and vanished empires.

Originally, adventure films were created to appeal to men, creating major male heroic stars; however, today's adventure films have crossed over and added resourceful action heroines as costars, and even heroines as main characters, *Tomb Raider* (Dirks).

There also exist parodies to the adventure genre, most notably *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, but the adventure genre is so well adapted that its premise often becomes the baseline for parodies of other films that need a true plot.

The first adventure film I'll examine is *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, a movie directed by Stephen Spielberg, starring Harrison Ford. This is the third movie in the Indiana Jones series, in which an accomplished archaeologist searches for a historic biblical relic (the Holy Grail). The movie takes place in Berlin, Venice, its catacombs, and the republic of Hatay in the Middle East, among others. Spielberg even uses a well-known transition scene of a transparent plane flying over a map while a red line traces their path, covering the globe in a matter of seconds. The time period of the movie is the era of Nazi Germany, giving us a definite villain, as the Nazi's want the Grail for all the wrong reasons (and who would want them to have everlasting life?). Indiana is basically searching for his father until the Nazis shoot Jones Sr. (Sean Connery) to make Indiana find the Grail himself in order to save his father's life.

Good vs. evil, Americans vs. Nazis, the educated American teacher searches for the holiest of God's material creations, the cup of everlasting life. This movie is very optimistic throughout; Indiana is empowered by his will to find his father, though he is human, and his coveting of the Grail almost leads to his demise. The map in this movie is replaced by Jones Sr.'s diary, which contains his life work on the study and location of the Holy Grail. Harrison Ford's character is selfless and powerful, he is well educated and artful in his escapes and discoveries, and his only motivation for finding the Holy Grail is to save his father's life, perfectly exemplifying Taves' hero. His character is the classic adventure hero, only killing when absolutely necessary, and more often finding ways to incapacitate his enemies instead.

Another motif displayed in this movie is the villain's need of the hero to find the treasure. The Nazis, after sending some of their own men to their failures and deaths, need Indiana to find the Grail because he is capable of the task. The idea is that the villain alone could never win without the hero, whose wisdom and skill is always necessary for the villain to achieve the treasure and his reliance on the hero often leads to his downfall. The point of the movie is the adventure, the quest involved in following the trail of the Nazis to find his father, and finally the shared quest of Indiana and his father in the discovery of the icon, which Jones Sr. has made his life, the Holy Grail. This film is a great example of the adventure genre, fitting the settings, themes, characters, motifs and icons, all the while being an incredibly entertaining film.

The next film I will look at is *National Treasure*, directed by John Turteltaub, and starring Nicholas Cage. This is a slightly less flashy adventure movie than the Indiana Jones films, for it takes place entirely in America and is modeled after a non-religious story. Instead, *National Treasure* is based on our own national history and takes place at recognizable historical sites. In this movie alone, we see the interior of the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the J. Edgar Hoover building (FBI), the Department of Homeland Security, Independence Hall, Trinity Church in New York City, and Old North Church in Boston. The time period is present day America, but that adds to the challenge of the clues, because it tells a story of our past, a story of great treasure, and puzzles that have not been solved in over 200 years.

The conflict in this movie is between Ben Gates, a descendent of the stable boy of John Carroll, and Ian Howe, a man of great wealth and not so great scruples. Both men are searching for the treasure of all treasures, one that is believed to have been passed on with the fall of every great empire in the history of man. Howe is the money, the

financier of the endeavors necessary to find the treasure, and Gates is the brains, his knowledge of American history second to none. The two go through numerous clues in search of the treasure, from riddles to ciphers, to a word map on the back of the Declaration of Independence. Like Indiana Jones, Gates is very moralistic; he even steals the Declaration of Independence from the National Archives himself so Howe cannot. Both men want to find the treasure, but Gates wants to find it to bring centuries lost knowledge to the people of the world, whereas Howe wants to find the treasure for the money and power.

Keeping with the themes of the characters in an adventure film, the heroes never yield a weapon in this movie, while Howe's men are almost always carrying guns. This is a true battle between good and evil: Gates' clan of educated but inexperienced safe players vs. the gun totting, hired henchmen. Also in this movie we see the motif of the reliance of the bad guys on the brains of the hero, yet again. Howe needs Gates to interpret the clues left behind to find the treasure, while Howe does have infinite economic resources, he can solve only the simplest of riddles. The hero emerges victorious in the end by providing a false clue, without guns drawn or bloodshed on either side (at least not on purpose), and it ends with Gates finding the treasure, and Howe going to jail.

The adventure genre relates to all movie watchers, and that is what adds to its timelessness. We travel with the hero to exotic locations, share in his victories and struggles, all the while attempting to solve the clues right along with him. Adventure films have entertained us for decades, and as long as there are stories of lost continents and buried treasure, they will entertain us for decades to come.

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## Thrillers

Audiences attend movies to experience something beyond their everyday existence. Glory, love, grief, and fear are only some of the emotions that a great film can inspire. Thriller films provide viewers with an encounter of untold suspense that has them biting their nails on the edges of their seats.

Films in the thriller/suspense genre have elements of drama, detective, and film noir, but are different in how they approach the plot. Since the plot is what essentially defines a thriller, it is often combined with another genre such as sci-fi, crime, western, and horror, which prevents thriller films from having typical locations or recurring icons (Dirks, 1996). There may be some similarities from film to film, but what really matters is the mood of uncertainty and the suspense building-plot.

The plot of a thriller follows one main character as he or she moves toward a dramatic climax while building suspense, uncertainty, and fear in the viewer (Dirks, 1996). The climax is a key element to the thriller because the uncertainty is finally resolved and the protagonist must avert some sort of crisis. This is evident in the western-thriller *High Noon* where uncertainty and anticipation peak as the clock strikes twelve and then resolves as Kane finally faces the infamous Frank Miller.

The most time is spent building up to a critical moment and once that moment is over the thriller quickly ends. Thriller films are not about resolution; they are about suspense and how the protagonist deals with it. And so once the suspense is dealt with the movie ends. There is a good example of this in *Pi* where the protagonist Max reaches his

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critical point and in agony he lobotomizes himself. The film ends one scene later where he is on a bench and can no longer multiply incredible sums in his head. Another example is Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* in which there is no explanation or conclusion to the animals' violent behavior and the movie ends as the family drives away after a night of terrifying bird attacks. When the suspense ends, the thriller also ends often without any respect to loose ends.

Plots tend to be convoluted and so aspects of the film may seem enigmatic until the climax when some sort of truth is revealed (Dirks, 1996). The plot is unfolded in bits and pieces both to the main character and to the audience. It is common in thrillers to know only as much as the protagonist knows, which creates the mood of uncertainty. The audience is denied omniscience and knows only as much as the characters in the film. There are no scenes of the antagonist revealing his plans; everything is left to speculation. This limited style of plot elaboration is present in Christopher Nolan's *Memento* where the motivations of the other characters are only revealed in their on-screen interactions with Leonard, the main character. This withholding of information may not be as complete as *Memento* across the genre, but some degree of plot uncertainty is required for a film to qualify as a thriller.

Subject matter in thrillers tends to be dark and menacing in nature to build more fear and suspense in the viewer. If Norman Bates, for example, held conversations in his head with the Cookie Monster instead of his mother, *Psycho* would be a good deal less unnerving. Psychological problems are very common in thrillers because they drive characters, often villains, to commit unpredictable acts using incomprehensible logic, thus creating the uncertainty of a thriller. A character like Marnie from *Marnie* unsettles

the audience and adds a new element of suspense to the film through her irrational behavior. Espionage is another classic subject in thrillers because it produces suspense through the devious and rational plans of international intrigue. What is so “thrilling” about espionage thrillers is that the danger and violence is created with deliberate consent, not by some erratic mental disorder. Finally, murder or physical danger are standards in thriller films because people fear them. Thus any plot is easily and believably generated in a character’s attempts to evade harm.

The protagonists in thriller films are involved, often unknowingly, in dangerous situations (Dirks, 1996). They often don’t know whom to trust and may not even realize that they are at the center of the plot until the climax of the film. An example of this is David Fincher’s *Se7en* in which detective Mills finds out from the killer himself that the man killed his wife to provoke Mills into killing him and thus to commit the final deadly sin: wrath. Main characters are generally good, innocent individuals, although there are some recurring protagonist types in thrillers such as world-weary men and women (*Se7en*), detectives (*Silence of the Lambs*), secret agents (*North by Northwest*), troubled individuals (*Donnie Darko*), and individuals with dark pasts (*Memento*) (Dirks, 1996).

Villains in thrillers tend to be humans, though many border on psychosis due to their obsessive and bizarre behavior. Typical villains are convicts, stalkers, psychotics, terrorists, manipulative individuals, and assassins (Dirks, 1996). Another common aspect is for the villain to remain shadowy or mysterious for a period of time and sometimes until the climax of the film. M. Night Shyamalan’s *Signs* exhibits this pattern as a hostile alien assaults a family for the entire film, but isn’t fully revealed until the end. This approach creates anxiety concerning the identity and motives of the antagonist.

The thriller has not developed much since its creation because it is the plot that defines a thriller not characters or settings. When its defining quality is “a plot that builds suspense,” either a film is a thriller or it isn’t. As a genre it goes back to early films such as Fritz Lang’s *M* in 1931 and George Cukor’s *Gaslight* in 1944, but its real founder is considered to be Alfred Hitchcock (Dirks, 1996). It’s not that he devised a new way to structure the thriller; rather that he just directed so many of them that they had to be recognized as a genre. Hitchcock was known for interweaving taboo subjects into his films such as the Oedipus complex of Norman Bates in *Psycho* or the twisted sexuality of Marnie in *Marnie* (Dirks, 1996). Voyeurism, mistaken identity, sexuality, and obsession are some other subjects he addressed through his films (Dirks, 1996). Hitchcock’s espionage thrillers are often accredited with inspiring the spy film genre. He is also known for appearing in cameos in nearly all his films. Directors such as Quentin Tarantino and M. Night Shyamalan have adopted this practice.

Hitchcock invented a plot device called a “McGuffin” to attract the audience’s attention and to mislead it (Dirks, 1996). Initially a McGuffin seems integral to the plot and drives the film forward, but later it fades into irrelevance (Dirks, 1996). In *Psycho* the McGuffin is the stolen \$40,000, which only acts to send Marion to the Bates Motel where her murder begins the real plot of unraveling the mystery of Norman’s mother.

Alfred Hitchcock made the thriller into a genre starting in the 30s. It continues to be a genre producing Hollywood blockbusters such as *The Sixth Sense*, *The Others*, and *Silence of the Lambs*.

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### Movie Review-Sixteen Candles

For some films, their greatness lies not in their cinematic excellence, but in their ability to act as a time capsule. *Sixteen Candles* (1984), directed by John Hughes, is one of these movies, making kids my age nostalgic for an era they never even knew. John Hughes has a particular knack for capturing the spirit of adolescence, as he continues to do in his other films, such as *Pretty in Pink* or *The Breakfast Club*. He triumphs with *Sixteen Candles* which, although dealing with adolescent angst and the typical themes of love, sex and partying, manages to become more than another teen movie.

*Sixteen Candles* is hopelessly dated, and yet still resonates with audiences more than twenty years later. The Ked's, the hair-do's, and the lingo of the time reveal the movie's 1980's roots, but underneath the hairspray and poofy sleeves there are timeless lessons.

On the surface, *Sixteen Candles* has all the ingredients of a cutesy teen flick: the brooding older love interest, the innocent blossoming girl, the pesky nerd and the oblivious family. Viewers will be drawn to the movie because it is welcoming and comforting, letting us know that we are not alone in our teenage tribulations. Molly Ringwald makes the perfect ingénue to guide audiences through a teenager's world of family troubles, insecurities, and embarrassments. Who hasn't fallen victim to one of these woes? Anyone who has will be glad to see them represented so comically in *Sixteen Candles*. The humor makes Ringwald's (and our own) troubles seem more bearable. Hughes guides us through excruciating situations like a forgotten birthday, an unrequited love, a bothersome admirer and a pesky little brother, and leaves us laughing the whole time.

*Sixteen Candles* is an all around feel good movie. I kept waiting for the one horrible twist or misunderstanding that would send all of Samantha Baker's hopes crashing to the ground again, but it thankfully never came. There were certainly plenty of awkward turns of events, but overall things kept going uphill for her, which will lift the viewer's spirits. Sprinkled in with the laughter are bittersweet

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jewels of wisdom, like when Samantha's dad explains to her that "That's why they call them crushes...if they were easy, they'd call them something else." And it is all wrapped up in a nice, cozy, happy ending, where everyone gets what is due to them. Viewers will be convinced once again that all is right in the world. Any movie with the line, "Can I borrow your underpants for ten minutes?" is definitely worth a watch.

Emily Perchlik

Movie Review: *Across the Universe*

The first twenty minutes of Julie Taymor's, *Across the Universe*, 1960's Beatles tribute musical, were promising. It begun with dialogue between songs, attention grabbing choreography, clever twists on Beatles classics, and some character development before the plot went careening headlong into a two hour acid trip through the sixties set to Beatles tunes.

The film really begins to "grow so incredibly high," (much like the flowers in Beatles tune *Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds*) when youngsters, Jude (*Hey Jude*), Lucy (*Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds*), Max (*Maxwell's Silver Hammer*), Prudence (*Dear Prudence*), Jo Jo (*Get Back Jo Jo*), and Sadie (*Sexy Sadie*) go on a blowout trip with 'Dr. Roberts' (played by Bono) in a psychedelic van going to who knows where. The characters themselves are confused by the time the bus stops asking, "Where are we?" and making vague, jumbled attempts at philosophical musings. I my guess is that they're stuck in between a train of weakly strung together Beatles tunes that is trying very hard to become a philosophical musing about war, love, the 60's, and the Beatles themselves.

By the end of the film, I honestly felt a little dizzy. The movie jumps from black and white, to infrared, to mirror image; sky background, to crazy circus tent, to water background with out much transition. So many jumps from camera filter to camera filter made the film difficult to take it all in at once. Honestly, if you've ever played with Macintosh's I-Photo, the filters on Adobe Photoshop, or on your digital camera, you have a basic idea of the imagery of *Across the Universe*, directed by Julie Taymor. The most distracting effect for me was when the shots would switch to black and white for

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seemingly no reason and after a few seconds, switch right back in the middle of a sentence. From what I could tell, this didn't signal anything important in the plot line, it was just something 'cool' to do.

As much as I love the Beatles, one continuous string of Beatles songs (31 throughout the whole film) is a little much for 2 hours and 13 minutes. A few more breaks of dialogue would have allowed for the plot connections to be stronger and for the audience to get a bit of a break. The songs sometimes seem squeezed in by naming the characters after Beatles lyrics. Dear Prudence is a perfect example of both overload in songs and effects. Sadie, Jude, and Lucy are trying to get the Asian lesbian ex-cheerleader named Prudence to come out of the hall closet by singing Dear Prudence. The room starts to turn in to a blue sky with clouds and all the characters happily sing in it. We never see Prudence actually emerge from the closet; her issue is never resolved making the scene superfluous.

I recommend approaching *Across the Universe* as a series of music videos instead of a full length feature. Broken up into parts, this compellation is quite compelling. It is easier appreciating the interpretative art of each song when not overwhelmed by the entire two and a quarter hours of intense imagery. The songs in the films are excellently interpreted. The staging attempts to emphasize the meaning of the words and recreate the context of their beginnings. The singing is fantastic and the actors did a great job of using their voices, facial expressions, and body movements to convey the specific tone of each scene. The Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin look a-likes in the movie are an interesting side tribute to some other sixties artists as they belt out Beatles tunes like Hendrix or Joplin might have had they ever sung Beatles songs. For as little as the characters were

developed in the plot, I thought that Jim Sturgess (Jude), Evan Rachel Wood (Lucy), Joe Anderson (Maxwell), and Dana Fuchs (Sadie), did a good job of connecting me with their characters through the expression of the songs. The rest of the characters were much harder to get a grasp on. A few, like Jo Jo and Wes Huber, the radical peace activist, were added after most dialogue had disappeared from the screen. Although we see Prudence early on, she keeps disappearing and reappearing with out any explanation and she gets lost as well.

Basically, when watching *Across the Universe*, don't expect an enthralling plot and deep, touching characters. This film doesn't meet expectations one would have of a full length picture regarding these categories. The goals that this film does meet, however, are making as many Beatles songs as possible vaguely relate to each other and putting on an awesome visual show. So if you love the Beatles and would find a 1960's rewind tribute to them composed of a bunch of cleverly, but loosely strung together, visually stunning music videos exhilarating, than you will love *Across the Universe*.

Megan Griffith  
Movie Review-Pride & Prejudice  
March 6, 2008

The latest adaptation of Jane Austen's most popular novel, directed by Joe Wright, was an eye-catching ride, but hardly true to the author's storyline. The screenplay written by Deborah Moggach (with help from Emma Thompson on the dialogue) condensed the novel's witty repartee to an abbreviated two-hour version. Focus was shifted from the novel's version of events via Elizabeth Bennet's view to a kinder one that revolved around all of the sisters and their relationship with their parents, especially their mother. Brenda Blethyn brought reason and understanding to Mrs. Bennet's usually silly character. The audience is better able to side with her when she shows concern for her daughters' welfare and future happiness by the few sensible speeches she is given in the movie that are denied her in Austen's novel. She really does love them and wants to make sure that they have secure situations, since hers is not after Mr. Bennet's death.

The film still has a taste of the "comedy of manners" that was typical of Austen's work, but brings a dramatic and sexually tense romance to the foreground throughout the whole of the movie. Long sweeping shots of barely lit landscape are cinematically pleasing but are not in character with Austen's work, where the action took place in more domesticated places like drawing rooms –places that an unmarried female Austen was familiar with. Visual focus was handed over the hidden dark side of Regency Britain: marrying for money and security and climbing the social ladder to do so. The film shows how two sisters bridged the gap between two social classes: noisy and raucous in the lower, reserved and quiet in the upper where true feelings are suppressed because of social dictums. Wright takes care to place long, wide landscape shots when Elizabeth crosses from one world to another. The first being by foot to Neatherfield and the last when Keira Knightley literally crosses a bridge and dark, boggy landscape to confront her true feelings and meets her man, securing happiness, quite literally by

Megan Griffith  
Movie Review-Pride & Prejudice  
March 6, 2008

crossing forever over into his elevated rank. These shots are shown to emphasize the distance that has to be crossed, and they become fewer and shorter as the film continues.

Excellent performances by Judi Dench as Lady Catherine de Bourg and Mr. Collins played by Tom Hollander made these secondary characters refreshing to watch. The latter especially brought a new twist to the reverend's personal motives, making him physically and verbally awkward as well as pitiful and sexually repressed. Keira Knightley's performance was also superb. Lizzy Bennet's impulses were quite believable, but her presence faded on screen because her costume was almost always drab and unflattering. The heroine should have a slightly more commanding presence to attract your eye when on screen. These great performances offset the poor choice for Mr. Darcy. Matthew Macfadyen was disappointing in his role, and he delivered the lines like rattling off a boring list. The 1995 A&E television version with Colin Firth, that Andrew Davies wrote the screenplay to, was a much better depiction of the famous hero.

By the end of the film, the story has spiraled outward from mother and daughters to father and suitors, introducing honorable men and security as the final reward. It is a witty romantic comedy that is tied up with a neat little bow at the end, making the film enjoyable to watch when the good are rewarded and the bad are punished with each other's company.