Woody Allen (Allen Konigsberg, 1 December 1935, Brooklyn, NY) has made nearly one movie a year for the past 40 years. From Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia: "His first movie job, as screenwriter and actor in 1965's What's New Pussycat?, instantly made him a demi-icon of the swinging sixties. In 1966's ingenious What's Up, Tiger Lilly? Allen and several character actors (including his then-wife Louise Lasser) dubbed ridiculous dialogue onto an already silly-looking Japanese spy thriller. When making his first film as a director, the crime-documentary parody Take the Money and Run (1969), Allen had to be convinced to squelch a doomy, portentous side to which he gave free rein in later works. Money's editor, Ralph Rosenblum, recalled that its first cut ended with Allen being slaughtered, à la Bonnie and Clyde, in a scene completely at odds with the rest of the movie.

"After Money came a series of dazzling comedies-Bananas (1971), Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex* (*but were afraid to ask) (1972), Sleeper (1973), Love and Death (1975)—in which Allen honed his Manhattan schlemiel persona to a fine edge while reveling in absurdist gags, outlandish situations, and pointed social satire. 1977's Annie Hall was a breakthrough movie: while very funny, it was also a serious and often moving look at modern urban romance, and it won Allen a Best Director Oscar (he shared the Academy's Best Screenplay Oscar with cowriter Marshall Brickman, and was also nominated for Best Actor). From that point on, Allen's films became more serious, starting with Interiors (1978), a heavy, Bergman-influenced drama which he wrote and directed but did not star in. The film, replete with self-conscious, straight-out-of-film-school visual compositions, was neither an artistic nor commercial success (although it received several Oscar nominations including Best Director and Screenplay), but seemed to provide Allen with the tools needed to blend comedy and drama. He's done that with varying degrees of success in all his subsequent films, which he makes at the steady rate of one a year.

"Manhattan" (1979), a bittersweet romantic comedy that painted New York City in nostalgic black-and-white and underscored its scenes with Gershwin music, was critically and commercially successful, and snagged him another Academy Award nomination for Best Screenplay. In the acerbic and candid self-portrait Stardust Memories (1980) he poked fun at those who yearned for his "earlier, funnier" films, then responded with A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy (1982) and the ingenious Zelig (1983) in which he played a human chameleon (thanks to some delicious cinematic sleight-of-hand). Broadway Danny Rose (1984), The Purple Rose of Cairo (1985), and Radio Days (1987) garnered him more Oscar nominations for screenwriting. He nailed one for Hannah and Her Sisters (1986), one of his most mature films, and one of his biggest box office successes. His dramatic efforts from this period, September (1987) and Another Woman (1988), were marred by the same heavy-handedness he'd displayed in Interiors and were not well received. 1989's Crimes and Misdemeanors however, showed him back in form, albeit with a curious, existentialist opus that dispelled the notion that evil deeds never remain unpunished; it was a startling concept that he made not only convincing but, at times, uproariously funny. Alice (1990), a starring vehicle for his former love, Mia Farrow, had moments of brilliance but was on the whole very ordinary. Shadows and Fog (1992), another downbeat, leaden drama, found critics impatient with Allen's relentless efforts to recast himself as an American Bergman; it won the director some of his most complimentary reviews.

"Allen was married to Louise Lasser, who appeared in several of his earlier films, and then had long-term relationships with leading lady Diane Keaton and with Mia Farrow, who appeared in almost all of his 1980s pictures. Farrow and Allen had one son together, but became international gossip fodder in 1992 when he was forced to admit a romantic liaison with her adopted daughter Soon-Yi Previn; she subsequently accused him of sexually molesting their child. This unprecedented publicity brouhaha (for two extremely private people) gave unexpected notoriety to Allen's concurrently released Husbands and Wives (1992), an excellent film that nonetheless caused snickering at many showings because of "leading" dialogue between Allen and Farrow. He then called on Diane Keaton to replace Farrow in Manhattan Murder Mystery (1993), his lightest comedy in years, and earned Oscar nominations for directing and cowriting Bullets Over Broadway (1994), the wryly comic tale of a young playwright at odds with the New York theatre world in the 1920s. He then turned to TV, directing, writing and starring in an adaptation of his play "Don't Drink the Water" (1994), and then acting opposite Peter Falk in an updated version of Neil Simon's "The Sunshine Boys" (1995).
"Back in 1967 he costarred in the all-star James Bond spoof Casino Royale as "Jimmy" Bond, but in the intervening years he has rarely appeared in films he hasn't also written and directed himself. There have been a few notable exceptions: Play It Again, Sam (1972), adapted from his delightful hit Broadway play, which he performed many times on stage; The Front (1976), in which he was ideally cast as a nebbish who fronts for blacklisted writers during the McCarthy era; and Paul Mazursky's Scenes from a Mall (1991), in which he was amusingly and improbably cast as an I-live-in-L.A.-and-like-it lawyer (complete with pony tail!) opposite Bette Midler. It was an endeavoring and accomplished performance which, unfortunately, was not supported by an equally accomplished script. He also appeared briefly in Jean-Luc Godard's odd, experimental King Lear (1987)."


**Diane Keaton** (5 January 1946, Los Angeles) made 8 movies with Woody Allen: Annie Hall (1977), Love and Death (1975), Manhattan (1979), Manhattan Murder Mystery (1993), Radio Days (1987), Play It Again, Sam (1972), Interiors (1978) and Sleeper (1973). [IMDb bio](https): "She got her first major stage role in the Broadway rock musical "Hair". As understudy to the lead, she gained attention by not removing any of her clothing. In 1970, Woody Allen cast her in his Broadway play "Play It Again, Sam", which had a successful run. It was during this time that she became involved with Allen and appeared in a number of his films. The first one was Play It Again, Sam (1972), the screen adaptation of the stage play. That same year Francis Ford Coppola cast her as Kay in the Oscar-winning The Godfather (1972) and she was on her way to stardom. She reprised that role in the film's first sequel, The Godfather: Part II (1974), ...

"In 1977 she broke away from her comedy image to appear in the chilling Looking for Mr. Goodbar (1977), which won her a Golden Globe nomination. It was the same year that she appeared in what many regard as her best performance, in the title role of Annie Hall (1977), which Allen wrote specifically for her (her real last name is Hall, and her nickname is Annie), and what an impact she made. She won the Oscar and the British Award for Best Actress and Allen won the Directors Award from the DGA. She started a fashion trend with her unisex clothes and was the poster girl for a lot of young males. Her mannerisms and awkward speech became almost a national craze. The question being asked, though, was, 'Is she just a lightweight playing herself, or is there more depth to her personality?' For whatever reason, she appeared in but one film a year for the next two years and those films were by Allen. When they broke up she was next involved with Warren Beatty and appeared in his film Reds (1981), as the bohemian female journalist Louise Bryant. For her performance she received nominations for the Academy Award and the Golden Globe. For the rest of the 1980s she appeared infrequently in films, but won nominations in three of them. Attempting to break the typecasting she had fallen into, she took on the role of a confused, somewhat naive woman who becomes the tool of Middle Eastern terrorists in The Little Drummer Girl (1984). To offset her lack of movie work, Diane began directing. She directed the documentary Heaven (1987), as well as some music videos. For television she directed an episode of the popular, but strange, "Twin Peaks" (1990).

"In the 1990s she began to get more mature roles, though she reprised the role of Kay Corleone in the third "Godfather" epic, The Godfather: Part III (1990). She appeared as the wife of Steve Martin in the hit Father of the Bride (1991) and again in Father of the Bride Part II (1995). In 1993 she once again teamed with Woody Allen in Manhattan Murder Mystery (1993), which was well received. In 1995 she received high marks for Unstrung Heroes (1995), her first major feature as a director."


**Gordon Willis** (28 May 1931, Queens, NY). From Leonard Maltin's Film Encyclopedia: "The warm, subdued hues that contributed so much to the "feel" of Francis Ford Coppola's The Godfather (1972) and its 1974 and 1990 sequels were the contribution of this talented cinematographer, whose understated colors, naturalistic lighting, and striking black-and-white imagery made him one of the industry's preeminent craftsmen. As a youth, he worked in summer stock theater, both onstage and backstage, then served in the air force and gained experience as a cameraman. Upon his return to civilian life, he decided to pursue that career and spent a number of years filming documentaries and commercials before breaking into mainstream movies. He photographed such interesting 1970s pictures as The Landlord, Loving (both 1970), Klute (1971), Bad Company (1972), The Paper Chase (1973), The Parallax View (1974), All the President's Men (1976), and Annie Hall (1977); the latter kicked off his collaboration with Woody Allen, which continued with Interiors (1978), Manhattan (1979, in widescreen black & white), Stardust Memories (1980, in b & w), A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy (1982), Broadway Danny Rose (1984, b & w), and The Purple Rose of Cairo (1985). In 1980 Willis made an ill-advised directorial debut with Windows a nasty, unpleasant thriller in which psychotic lesbian Elizabeth Ashley relentlessly pursued Talia Shire. The effort was met with a hail of well-deserved brickbats from both film critics and gay-rights groups. Willis returned to cinematography, capturing both moods of Pennies From Heaven (1981), the Edward Hopper-esque images of the Depression, and the thousand-kilowatt look of 1930s movie-musical numbers. He stretched his technical skills in Woody Allen's 1983 fantasy Zelig and went on to photograph The Money Pit (1986), The Pick-up Artist (1987), Bright Lights, Big City (1988), and Presumed Innocent (1990), among others.

Long shunned by his colleagues in the cinematography branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Willis finally earned an Oscar nomination for his brilliant work on Zelig-for which he deliberately made his images look as flat, grainy, and scratchy as possible (to suit the movie's gimmick of being a pseudodocumentary full of vintage newsreel film). The irony was compounded when, having been ignored for his work on the first two multi-Oscar-winning Godfather movies, he was nominated for the third (and least impressive) of the trilogy." He has done only two films since: Malice (1990) and The Devil's Own (1997)

*from World Film Directors Vol. II. Ed. John Wakeman, H.W. Wilson Co. NY 1988:* At fifteen, [Allen] started sending one-line
jokes to the newspaper columnists Earl Wilson and Walter Winchell, and these were frequently published (though often with attribution to established celebrities instead of Allen. This success led to a job with a public relations firm that supplied comedic material to Bob Hope, Arthur Murray, Guy Lombardo, and other entertainers. Allen graduated from Midwood High School in Brooklyn and, after one semester at New York University (where he failed his only film course), left for Hollywood to join NBC’s writers’ program. At nineteen he married Helen Rosen, whom he had known in high school, and began working as a writer for Sid Caesar, Ed Sullivan, and The Tonight Show. During this period he was also reading a great deal of literature and philosophy, for a time hiring a private tutor. (Perhaps it is not surprising that Allen holds a “very, very dim view of the American educational system.”)

By 1960 Allen was divorced and living in New York City. Tired of putting his best gags into other comics’ mouths and, with the encouragement of his managers and future producers Jack Rollins and Charles Joffe, came out from behind his typewriter as a stand-up comedian in his own right. He performed for little or no pay at Greenwich Village nightclubs like The Duplex, The Bitter End, and The Blue Angel, and though he likened his interactions with his audiences to an “intimate relationship between Sisyphus and his stone,” and later described this as a very lonely, frustrating period of his life, these early improvisational performances laid the groundwork for his confessional style of humor.

In fact, Allen was a success from the outset, and his reputation grew rapidly over the next four years, bringing him national press coverage and very large fees. His club and campus work was preserved on three long-play records, twice reissued as two-record sets. He based his routines on those of Bob Hope, Mort Sahl, and Nichols and May, all of whom adopted the “schnook” or victim stance in their comedy. Woody Allen is a small man—five feet, six inches tall, and “a little less slender than the microphone”—with receding red hair and large eyeglasses. His face is habitually drawn into an expression of mournful anxiety close to panic, and his body “bent like a question mark,” suggests a strong desire to bolt. In halting monologues he confessed his troubles with women, analysts, schoolyard bullies, Park Avenue doormen (his own included), and other real or imagined authority figures.

Much of Allen’s nightclub humor was built on what he called “the urban Jewish mentality...of being wracked with guilt and suffering, of feeling one step ahead of trouble and anxiety,” but he mocked all religions, as well as such institutions as marriage and Jewish family life, art and intellectualism, liberal politics, and conservative politics, sparing no one, least of all himself. Diane Jacobs has said that Allen’s stage persona made “a virtue of his innate shyness, proclaiming his vulnerability in unctuous disclaimers, confessions and well-charted stammers—the idea being, who could attack this creature?” Richard Schickel has described Allen as “a walking compendium of a generations concerns, comically stated,” who leaves us feeling “that our own interior monologues have been tapped and are being broadcast.” And Pauline Kael write that he “made the whole country more aware of the feelings of those who knew they could never match the images of Wasp perfection that saturated their lives...[He] helped people feel more relaxed about the way they looked...their sexual terrors, and everything else that made them anxious.

Allen established his public image so successfully that from this point in his career onward, audiences and critics would treat the man and his stage-screen persona as one. Despite disclaimers, Woody Allen is seen as the same nebbish he plays and writes about, and he is clearly not bothered by the confusion enough to fight it. He encourages it, in fact, by equipping every character he plays—nineteenth-century Russian or 1980s New Yorker, man or child—with his trademark: his own black-rimmed glasses. The illusion that we are watching films not only by but “about” Woody Allen is heightened by the fact that he generally casts his real-life companion (Diane Keaton, Mia Farrow) as his female lead.

Allen’s immersion in the cinema began in 1964 When Charles K. Feldman caught his act and hired him to work on several films, beginning with the immensely successful What’s New, Pussycat? This broad sexual farce was written by Allen—who also played one of the three leads—but was controlled by Feldman and director Clive Donner; so much so that Allen later said of this and the two Feldman movies which followed that “these were not my films.” What’s Up, Tiger Lily? of 1966 and Casino Royale of 1967 were both co-written by Allen, and the first, a Japanese spoof of the James Bond movies improbably dubbed with a Jewish-American soundtrack, was credited to Allen as “re-release director.” Casino Royale, a broad sexual farce was written by Allen, and the first, a Japanese spoof of the James Bond movies improbably dubbed with a Jewish-American soundtrack, was credited to Allen as “re-release director.” Casino Royale, a broad sexual farce was written by Allen, and the first, a Japanese spoof of the James Bond movies improbably dubbed with a Jewish-American soundtrack, was credited to Allen as “re-release director.”

While finishing work on the Feldman films, Allen wrote the stage play Don’t Drink the Water...Allen’s second Broadway play, Play it Again, Sam (1969), is a sort of fleshing-out of his nightclub “loser” character. Allen starred as film critic Allan Felix (the first of many writers he would create and play). Felix has been recently deserted by both his analyst and his wife, the latter explaining: “I can’t stand the marriage. I don’t find you funny. I feel you suffocate me...and I don’t dig you physically. For God’s sake don’t take it personal.” Felix invokes the spirit of his idol Humphrey Bogart as his adviser and role model in matters of love, and the play blends reality and fantasy with deadpan facility.

As his reputation as comic and writer became established, Allen began to insist upon, and he granted, a high degree of creative autonomy in his filmmaking, and his favorite themes are evident even in the earliest of his “independent” films—the two short movies he made for a CBS television special in 1969. In “Cupid’s Shaft,” parodying City Lights, we see Allen as a Chaplinesque young loser pursued by the temporarily amnesiac Candice Bergen (he loses her when she comes to her senses. The other short, derived from Pygmalion, has Allen as a bogus rabbi hired to educate a beautiful young ignoramus (Bergen again) and seducing her in the process. In the end, he successfully passes her off as “one of the country’s leading pseudo-intellectuals” at the “annual Norman Mailer cocktail party” meanwhile demolishing the intellectual pretensions of his audience and himself. What Michael Dempsey calls “the comic defense mechanism” that pervades these works, fending off serious implications, and their characteristic mixture of reality and fantasy, prefigure Allen’s work of the next two decades.

Allen’s first feature as director was Take the Money and Run, completed in 1969 and produced by Charles Joffe for Palomar Pictures. Speaking many years later, Allen said of his earliest films that he had enjoyed just being funny: technical polish and innovation were as yet of little importance to him.

Allen himself has pointed out that in his second feature Bananas(1971), there are scenes that resemble those in Abbott and Costello or Bob Hope comedies. However, if the style was familiar, the content was not. In Bananas Allen plays an American
who stumbles into a revolution in a fictional Latin American country and gets to be President. The film sends up the mass media (Howard Cosell appears as “sportscaster for the revolution”) as well as the American government (“This time the CIA’s not taking any chances,” we learn. “Half will support the dictator, half the rebels.”) This satire confirmed a decided difference between Allen’s film persona and that of Charlie Chaplin, with whom Allen is sometimes compared. While each uses sight gags and functions as both perpetrator and victim of comic mishaps, Chaplin was above all an acrobatic clown, relying on physical humor. Allen is primarily a verbal, even a cerebral comic, and it is his delivery of lines that establishes his persona. Allen himself once said, “I can’ tell you what I am, but I can tell you what I’m not: Chaplinesque.”

Allen has also been compared to other predecessors: to Buster Keaton in his taste for the absurd; to Groucho Marx in his aggressive humor; and to Harpo for the mix of angel and satyr. However the clowning antics of earlier eras tended to parody social mores; those of the late 1960s and the 1970s often vivisected the mass media, including, of course, the cinema itself. Gerald Mast has pointed out that Take the Money and Run makes fun of Bonnie and Clyde (a mythopoetic gangster drama), In Cold Blood (a psychological portrait of a criminal), Modern Times (the experiences of an oddball in jail), and particularly the look of cinéma vérité, newly popular in the late 1960s....His third film Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex* (but were afraid to ask) was released in 1972.

By the early 1970s, Allen’s films were almost automatic commercial successes, if not boxoffice blockbusters, and they were readily distributed by United Artists.

In 1975, Allen published a second book of short fiction, Without Feathers, which contained among other metaphysical musings two one-act plays entitled “God” and “Death.” He also appeared in a film by Martin Ritt (and written by Walter Bernstein with Allen in mind) called The Front, about blacklist in the McCarthy era. Though Allen had vowed in the late 1960s never to act in anyone else’s films, he regarded this one as a worthy cause. The philosophical concerns that Allen had played with in Without Feathers and Love and Death were to find serious expression in his next feature, Annie Hall (1977), considered by many to be a turning point in his artistic development—his final escape from the constraints of commercial comedy. Annie Hall begins like Love and Death with Woody Allen delivering a monologue—this time directly to the camera. He is Alvy Singer, a successful New York Jewish comedian who might almost be Woody Allen. Singer is “trying to figure out where did the screw-up come?” in his relationship with his Wasp former girlfriend Annie Hall. After a summary of Alvy’s Brooklyn childhood and two unhappy marriages, we follow the history of that relationship, “sifting the pieces” in flashback, interspersed with moments of fantasy. Alvy had met Annie when she was a gauche and eccentric newcomer to New York. With his help and encouragement she had developed into a poised and successful nightclub singer. Their affair ended, resumed, and ended again for good when Annie moved to Los Angeles to pursue her career and a new lover (Paul Simon). Alvy writes his first play, basing it on their affair but with a happy ending, and thus, through the ameliorations of art, becomes reconciled to his loss.

Annie Hall is played by Woody Allen’s Wasp former girlfriend and professional protégée Diane Keaton (born Diane Hall), and yet Allen denies that the film is autobiographical, or an accurate record of his relationship with Keaton. Maurice Yacowar suggests that the film “seems more fruitfully located in the myth of Pygmalion than in Allen’s life story. It is the story of an artist who falls in love with his own creation and loses her when she blossoms into full life. Like the Pygmalion myth, it admits a double sympathy: one can appreciate the artist’s loss, but one can also understand his creation’s need for freedom and independence.”

If that is the film’s myth, its theme was explained by Allen in an Esquire interview with Frank Rich (May 1977). “The fundamental thing behind all motivation and all activity is the constant struggle against annihilation and against death, for even “the universe itself is not going to exist after a period of time.” Yacovar points out that this is the subject of Ernest Becker’s The Denial of Death, “the first book Alvy buys Annie and the one he lingers over when they are separating. Annie Hall dramatizes Becker’s argument that “man’s essential activities are a response to his sense of his inevitable death,” and that art itself is an attempt “to compensate for the limitations of life.”

Annie Hall, like Sleeper and several later films, was coscripted by Allen and the future director Marshall Brickman, and photographed by Gordon Willis, thereafter Allen’s regular cinematographer. The film was a turning-point in Allen’s career, not only in the seriousness of its concerns but in the confident use of the medium and its audacious departures from narrative convention. Alvy speaks directly to the camera/audience in his opening monologue and later invokes the audience’s support in an argument with Annie (“You heard that because you were there so I’m not crazy”). In an early exchange between Alvy and Annie, subtitles reveal what they are actually thinking as they exchange exploratory banalities.

There are other more purely visual experiments as well. Double exposure is used to show Annie’s “real self” rising from the bed while Alvy is making love to her body. There is an animated sequence in which Alvy imagines Annie as the attractively wicked stepmother of Disney’s Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. A split screen contrasts a deadly-gracious Easter dinner at Annie’s family home in Chippewa Falls with a raucous meal chez the Singers of Coney Island; the same device later shows us Annie and Alvy with their respective analysts, giving contrary versions of the same circumstances. According to Yacowar, these and “indeed all Allen’s liberties with film rhetoric assert the power of art in the struggle against the transience of love and life....Annie Hall is a character as charming, as absurd, and as elusive as life itself. She embodies Alvy’s denial of death through romantic love, and Allen’s through art.”

Annie Hall received Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, and Best Actress. It was also an immediate box-office success, particularly in sophisticated urban areas where audiences found their own fears and hang-ups for once receiving loving attention on the screen. As Diane Jacobs wrote, “This is our love story as well.”

But if Annie Hall was a “serious” comedy, it was still a comedy, and “when you do comedy,” Allen thought, “you’re not sitting at the grown-up table.” His first attempt to take his place at this board was Interiors (1978), scripted by Allen alone, but with no role for himself....

Drawing on such impeccable antecedents as King Lear, Checkov, Eugene O’Neill and, above all, Allen’s cinematic idol Ingmar Bergman, Interiors is a serious attempt to be serious. It was beautifully shot by Willis in cool grays and cream and pale pastels, and brought Allen an Oscar nomination as Best Director, but had a very mixed reception....Many reviewers thought Allen
had taken too much from Bergman. Richard Grenier wrote that he "endangered his project from the beginning by...imposing a Swedish ethos on urban American material."

*Manhattan*, which followed in 1979, was another collaboration with Marshall Brickman. Allen said that he had here attempted a marriage of the psychological delving of *Interiors* and the humor of *Annie Hall*. Most were relieved to find him back on his home ground, dealing again with “affluent, articulate, creative neurotics” in *Manhattan* here lovingly celebrated in black-and-white Panavision by Gordon Willis, and in the lush score by another devoted New Yorker, George Gershwin.

Woody Allen plays Isaac Davis, a television writer in his early forties who is having an affair with Tracy (Mariel Hemingway), a high school student of seventeen. Enchanted as he is, he cannot commit himself to the relationship on account of her youth. Isaac’s friends Yale (Michael Murphy) and Mary (Diane Keaton) are also having an affair, although Yale is married. When this relationship collapses, Isaac leaves Tracy and takes up with Mary. Isaac’s ex-wife (Meryl Streep) publishes a damning account of their marriage and his manifold neuroses. In the end, Yale leaves his wife to be reunited with Mary, and Isaac decides to commit himself to Tracy. He finds her just about to leave New York for England on a six-month scholarship, and agrees to wait for her....Andrew Sarris called it “the only true great film of the 1970s.” Not everyone has shared this view, however, and Peter Biskind maintains that Isaac’s desire for Tracy represents “a triumph of the 1970s over the 1950s, of *Playboy* over *Freud*, the id over the superego....*Manhattan* was the thinking man’s *Porky’s.*

Allen’s producers, Rollins and Joffe, previously distributing through United Artists, switched with *A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy* to Orion. Allen continued to work with his chosen collaborators and total artistic freedom, as well as sufficient budgets to make films like *Zelig* (1983), a technical tour de force that took three years to complete. Loosely based on the life of a renowned impostor of the 1920s and 1930s, it features Allen as Leonard Zelig, a nondescript little man who takes on the character of anyone he is with, and magically inserts himself into history, appearing in photographs beside such notables as Calvin Coolidge, Jack Dempsey, William Randolph Hearst, and Chaplin....

By combining real newsreel footage and photographs with perfectly matched counterfeits, Allen and Willis created a seamless “fictional documentary,” enhanced by “expert appraisals” of Zelig’s strange personality and achievements by such mandarins as Susan Sontag, Irving Howe, and Bruno Bettelheim, cheerfully satirizing their own critical procedures. Raising a variety of questions about the validity of newsreels and news photography, and in general about media manipulation of events, the film also reflects Allen’s concern about “a chameleon-like personality, giving up your own personality so you can be part of the crowd—an attitude that, carried to extremes, leads to fascism.”

Some see Woody Allen as a clown misguided enough to want to play Hamlet, or possibly Shakespeare. For Pauline Kael, it is as if he “had been blessed with perfect pitch for reaching audiences, and had then become tone-deaf.” On the other hand, many regard him as “the best American filmmaker” (Stanley Kauffmann) and as “America’s most authentic, most serious, most consistent film auteur” (Vincent Canby). Perhaps, as Allen said about *Stardust Memories*, it will be easier to judge when he is no longer “in the gossip columns.”

*from Schickel on Film*. Richard Schickel, William Morrow and Co. NY 1989: *When Hannah and Her Sisters* appeared in 1986, Vincent Canby stated very simply something that had needed saying for some time: “There’s nobody else in American film who comes anywhere near him in originality and interest.” To that thought he appended another: “One has to go back to Chaplin and Buster Keaton, people who were totally responsible for their own movies, to find anyone comparable to him.” It is an equally accurate observation, but it does not go quite far enough in its search for comparisons. It seems to me the truly relevant analogies are to be found not in film at all but in literature. Someone like John Updike, who approximates Woody in age, steady productivity, and consistency of quality, comes to mind....

He has actually achieved the most nearly perfect autonomy of anyone making movies in America today. So long as his budget remains under a certain figure (said to be in the ten-million-dollar range), he has to submit no script or outline to Orion pictures in order to go to work, to show nothing he has made to its executives before he wants to, to make no changes they think might be helpful when he does finally present them with his finished work. On the other hand, his schedules and budgets permit him time to reshoot entire sequences if he determines something isn’t working properly once he has assembled his rough cut. This is a form of control over his finished work that no other director I know of has. And again, the model is literary; when he reshoots he is in the position of a writer calmly revising his first draft before sending it off to his publisher, not that of the typical director desperately trying to oblige his second thoughts (and often enough his employers’ whims), yet confined to his editing room, frantically searching his trims and outtakes, looking for a miracle, because no one would think to give him the money to do the job properly by retakes.

There is something else about them [Allen’s characters] that is new in his work. They are all engaged in quite desperate efforts to find sexual fulfillment, and whatever jokes are strewn along their path, there is ultimately nothing funny about those pursuits....They all are people knowingly in pursuit of inappropriate and ultimately self-destructive loves and yet unable to stop themselves. This “victimization by one’s own emotions” is particularly a vice of the urban middle and upper classes, Woody thinks. “I know that passion, I see it all the time—the unfathomableness of desire,” he said to me, the subject having arisen because *Hannah and Her Sisters* so forcefully reverts to this theme. “The smartest men and women are trapped by it. They think they can control situations like this, but they can’t.”

Why this so fascinates him it is impossible to say—even famous people have secret lives, real or imaginary—but Woody quite openly identifies this subject as his major preoccupation, the one he believes he will never escape. “You go to see a Bergman film, and you know you will be dealing with God’s silence. Whenever you see a Scorsese film, you know there is going to be a sociopath in it. With me, it’s this thing. It’s there over and over again. You can’t help it—you need to deal with it in order to live.” The switch into the objectifying second person is too late; it cannot disguise the passion of his concern with passion’s victims.

*from Diane Keaton The Story of the Real Annie Hall*. Jonathan Moor. Robson Books London 1990: With *Annie Hall* and *Looking For Mr. Goodbar*, Diane’s real talent was recognized.
Shortly thereafter, Richard Schickel, film critic of *Time* magazine, when asked to appraise her talent for the London *Sunday Times*, said “She has to be the most interesting actress in American cinema. She can make the definitive portrayal of the modern American woman. She’s a quietly gritty girl, rather more subtle than people will allow. She’ll find the shading in a part and get to the truth, I’m sure she’s going to give us a lot of surprises.”

Allen has publicly said, “Diane has been my good luck charm....Since then [Take the Money] she’s been a consistently clear mind and clear voice on every picture I’ve made.” There’s no doubt that Diane was his muse. And without her, Annie Hall, one of the most important films of the decade, would have never been made. It would confirm Allen’s status as one of the most important filmmakers in the country, and prove that Diane was an actress and comedienne of substance—as well as turn her into an international celebrity as the progenitor of a new fashion style.

*Anhedonia* (an inability to experience pleasure) as the film was called up to the last moment (when United Artists executives begged Woody to change the title), was kept secret from the press as long as was possible.

The story of Alvy Singer, a neurotic Jewish stand-up comic, and Annie Hall, an actress and nightclub singer, is a story about relationships and how difficult they are to sustain. Reminiscent of Ingmar Bergman’s *Scenes from a Marriage*, Annie Hall could have been called “Scenes From a Relationship” as it seriously studies, under Woody’s wonderful comedy direction, the causes in the breakdown of an affair.

In originally calling the film “Anhedonia,” Woody was stating his belief that many relationships are destroyed because one partner or the other can’t take pleasure in the other. What makes it more tragic is that Alvy can’t take pleasure in the marvelously giddy, but hopelessly neurotic Annie. He’s worried about her not loving him enough, and she’s worried about his not being committed enough. (It’s beautifully illustrated in one scene, when split-screen they’re both talking about their sex lives to their shrinks. He says in a soulful tone, “Hardly ever, maybe three times a week,” and Annie’s disgruntled view is “All the time, at least three times a week.”

Vincent Canby, in *The New York Times* writes “In a decade largely devoted to male buddy-buddy films, brutal rape fantasies, and impersonal special effects extravaganzas, Woody Allen has almost single-handedly kept alive the idea of heterosexual romance in American films.” *Variety* went on to say, “His four romantic comedies with Diane Keaton strike a chord of believability that makes them nearly the only contemporary equivalent of the Tracy-Hepburn films.” The *Wall Street Journal* not only called the film “the best movie romance in a long time,” but defined Woody’s comedy as art, and said that Diane played “with exquisite comic flair.”...The “Annie Hall look” of crumpled men’s chinos, an oversized man’s white shirt, a vest, and a loud, large tie loosely knotted became the fashion expression of the season. Fashion designers copied her, and Diane did as much for pants for women as Marlene Dietrich and Katherine Hepburn had before her.

**Woody said:**

- “Human Beings are divided into mind and body. The mind embraces all the nobler aspirations, like poetry and philosophy, but the body has all the fun.”
- “I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work, I want to achieve it by not dying.”
- “I’m not afraid of dying...I just don’t want to be there when it happens.”
- In 1977: “This year I’m a star, but what will I be next year? A black hole?”
- “I’d rather live in my apartment”
- “Money is better than poverty, if only for financial reasons.”
- “Most of the time I don’t have much fun. The rest of the time I don’t have any fun at all.”
- “If it turns out that there is a God, I don’t think that he’s evil. But the worst that you can say about him is that basically he’s an underachiever.”
- “If only God would give me some clear sign! Like making a large deposit in my name at a Swiss bank.”
- “Time is nature’s way of keeping everything from happening at once.”
- “On the Academy Awards circa 1978] "They're political and bought and negotiated for - although many worthy people have deservedly won - and the whole concept of awards is silly. I cannot abide by the judgement of other people, because if you accept it when they say you deserve an award, then you have to accept it when they say you don't".
- “The sensibility of the film-maker infuses the project so people see a picture like *Annie Hall* (1977) and everyone thinks it's so autobiographical. But I was not from Coney Island, I was not born under a Ferris wheel, my father never worked at a place that had bumper cars, that's not how I met Diane Keaton, and that's not how we broke up. Of course, there's that character who's always beleaguered and harassed. Certain things are autobiographical, certain feelings, even occasionally an incident, but overwhelmingly they're totally made up, completely fabricated.”
- “I took a speed reading course and read *War and Peace* in twenty minutes. It involves Russia.”
- “Most of life is tragic. You're born, you don't know why. You're here, you don't know why. You go, you die. Your family dies. Your friends die. People suffer. People live in constant terror. The world is full of poverty and corruption and war and Nazis and tsunamis. The net result, the final count is, you lose - you don't beat the house.”

**Only three more films in the fall 2005 Buffalo Film Seminars:**
Nov 22 Rainer Werner Fassbinder *Marriage of Maria Braun/Die Ehe der Maria Braun* 1979 (35mm)
Nov 29 Terry Gilliam *Brazil* 1985 (35mm)
Nov Dec 6 Luchino Visconti *The Leopard/IL gattopardo* 1963 (35mm)

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**The Buffalo Film Seminars are presented by the Market Arcade Film & Arts Center &**

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