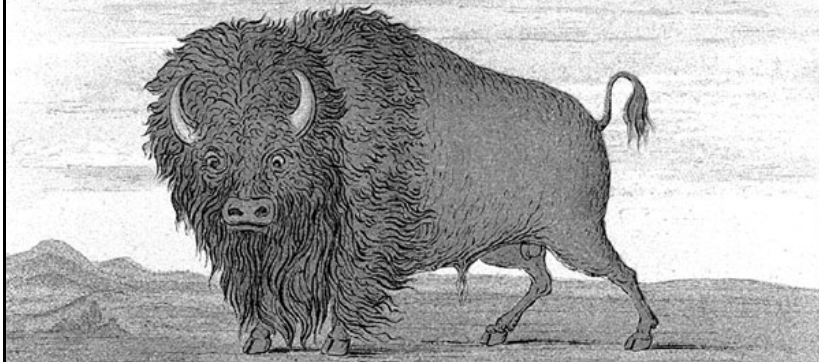


# The Buffalo Film Seminars



Conversations about great films with Bruce Jackson & Diane Christian

**TERRENCE MALICK** (30 November 1943, Waco, Texas, sometimes credited as David Whitney) has written and directed three films: *The Thin Red Line* 1998, based on James Jones's novel, *Days of Heaven* 1978, and *Badlands* 1973 which starred the best president the US never had (Martin Sheen) and made the music of Carl Orff almost popular. He's rarely interviewed or photographed, but you can see him briefly in *Badlands*: he's the man who comes knocking at the rich man's door.



**RICHARD GERE** (29 August 1949, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) was twice nominated for Razzie Awards (Worst Actor for *King David* 1985 and Worst Screen Couple for *Autumn in New York* 2000, nomination shared with Winona Ryder). He appeared in about 30 other films, only a few as bad as those two, and some a good deal better. Some of the latter are *Runaway Bride* 1999, *Pretty Woman* 1990, *The Cotton Club* 1984, *An Officer and a Gentleman* 1982, *American Gigolo* 1980, and *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* 1977.

**BROOKE ADAMS** (8 February 1949, New York, New York) was in several forgettable made-for-tv roles (e.g., *James Dean* 1976, *Murder on Flight 502* 1975, *Song of the Succubus* 1975, *The Daughters of Joshua Cabe Return* 1975) before getting her big screen break as Terry in *Car Wash* 1976. All her scenes in that film, alas, were cut. Then, after a few more dry runs, she had two smashing leading roles in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Days of Heaven*, both in 1978. She has worked regularly in film and tv series ever since, but the magic of that year never came about for her again.

**SAM SHEPARD** (Samuel Shepard Rogers, 5 November 1943, Fort Sheridan, Illinois) will probably be remembered as a playwright (*True West*, *Simpatico*, *Fool for Love*, *Mad Dog Blues*, *Curse of the Starving Class*, *Buried Child*, etc.) but his acting work in some 35 films comprises an impressive parallel career. Some of the films in which he acted are *All the Pretty Horses* 2000, *Snow Falling on Cedars* 1999, *Thunderheart* 1992, *Steel Magnolias* 1989, *Crimes of the Heart* 1986, *Fool for Love* 1985, *Country* 1984, *Paris, Texas* 1984, *The Right Stuff* 1983, *Frances* 1982, *Resurrection* 1980, and *Renaldo and Clara* 1978.

**LINDA MANZ** (1961, New York, New York) had a very minor role in *King of the Gypsies* (1978), then this terrific performance as the narrator/point-of-view of *Days of Heaven* the same year. After that, it was only 10 more film roles, nearly all of them minor parts, two of them German, the last of them *Buddy Boy* 1999. We dunno: maybe it's the accent.

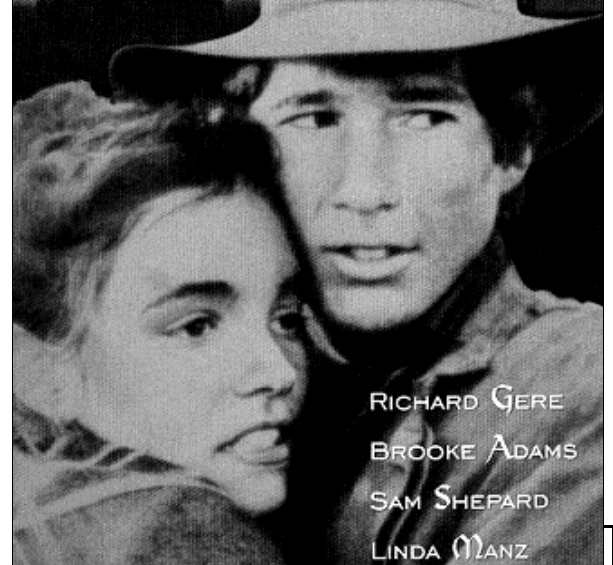


**ENNIO MORRICONE** (10 November 1928, Rome, Italy, sometimes credited as Leo Nichols and Dan Savio) is perhaps the most prolific film composer ever. His IMDB credits list nearly 400 theatrical and made-for-tv scores, as well as one TV series score – "The Virginian" in 1962. He scored all 5 of Sergio Leone's westerns, as well as *The Genius* and *Once Upon a Time in America*. He was nominated for five Best Music Original Score Oscars (*Mal na* 2000, *Bugsy* 1991, *The Untouchables* 1987, *The Mission* 1986, and *Days of Heaven*), but the churls never relaxed the usual chauvinism enough in the final ballot to give him the statuette. Some of his other film scores were for *Bulworth* 1998, *Lolita* 1997, *Wolf* 1994, *Disclosure* 1994, *Une pure formalit* 1994, *In the Line of Fire* 1993, *Cinema Paradiso* 1991, *Hamlet* 1990, *Money* 1990, *State of Grace* 1990, *Casualties of War* 1989, *La Cage aux folles* 1978 and 1900 1976.

**N STOR ALMENDROS** (Néstor Almendros Cuyas, 30 October 1930, Barcelona, Spain—4 March 1992, New York) was the great eye of *La Nouvelle Vague*, the movement of French film-critics-turned-directors that dazzled the film world in the late 1950s and early 1960s: he did nine films each for François Truffaut and Eric Rohmer, two of the five original members of the movement (the other three were Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol and Jacques Rivette; Agnès Varda and Louis Malle joined later). Some of his films were: *Billy Bathgate* 1991, *Heartburn* 1986, *Places in the Heart* 1984, *Vivement dimanche/Confidentially Yours* 1983, *Pauline la plage/Pauline at the Beach* 1983, *Sophie's Choice* 1982, *Le Dernier m tro/The Last Metro* 1980, *Kramer vs. Kramer* 1979, *L'Homme qui aimait les femmes/The Man Who Loved Women* 1977, *L'Histoire d'Ad le H./The Story of Adele H* 1975, *L'Amour l'apr s -midi/Chloe in the Afternoon* 1972, *Le Genou de*

November 27, 2001 (IV:13)

# DAYS OF HEAVEN



RICHARD GERE  
BROOKE ADAMS  
SAM SHEPARD  
LINDA MANZ

**Brooke Adams...**Abby  
**Sam Shepard...**The Farmer  
**Linda Manz...**Linda  
**Robert J. Wilke...** The Farm Foreman  
**Jackie Shultis...** Linda's friend  
**Stuart Margolin...** Mill Foreman  
**Doug Kershaw...** Fiddler  
**Richard Libertini...** Vaudeville Leader  
**Frenchie Lemond...** Vaudeville Wrestler  
**Sahbra Markus...** Vaudeville Dancer  
**Bob Wilson...** Accountant  
**Muriel Jolliffe...** Headmistress

Directed & written by **Terrence Malick**  
Produced by **Bert Schneider & Harold Schneider**

Original music by **Ennio Morricone**  
Non-original music by **Camille Saint-Sa ns** (from "Carnival of the Animals")  
Cinematography by **N stor Almendros**  
Film Editing by **Billy Weber**  
Special Effects **Mel Merrells**  
**Lewis Hine and Frances Benjamin Johnston....** title photographers  
**Haskell Wexler....** additional photography  
Paramount Pictures, 1978, 95 minutes

*Claire/Claire's Knee* 1970, *Ma nuit chez Maud/My Night at Maud's* 1969, and *The Collector* 1967. He received Best Cinematography Oscar nominations for *Sophie's Choice*, *The Blue Lagoon* 1980, and *Kramer vs. Kramer*; he won for *Days of Heaven*.

**HASKELL WEXLER** (6 February 1926) received a deeply-buried "additional photography by" for this film. The PR at the time of the film's release said he had done the industrial and train segments at the beginning; in a recent television interview he said that about half of the film was his footage (a claim echoed in Roger Ebert's comments, printed below) and said he never understood why Malick hadn't acknowledged it fairly. Here's the bio entry on him in *Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia*:

Near-legendary cameraman-called "the most widely known and honored of today's U.S. cinematographers" by Todd McCarthy of "Variety"—who moves between Hollywood, independent, documentary, and political projects. After years of making industrial and educational films, Wexler assumed director of photography chores on the documentary-style feature *The Savage Eye* (1960), and used that as his springboard to mainstream movie work. He started with small-scale films like *The Hoodlum Priest* and *Angel Baby* (both 1961), then worked with Elia Kazan on *America, America* (1963), and Tony Richardson on *The Loved One* (1965). He directed and produced the documentary *The Bus* (1965), then won an Oscar for his black-and-white lensing of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966). Firmly ensconced in the mainstream, with credits like *In the Heat of the Night* (1967), he seized an opportunity to make a film of his own. Wexler wrote, directed, and photographed the electrifying *Medium Cool* (1969), a fictional work that integrated actual footage of the riot-torn 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. It remains a landmark American film.

from *World Film Directors Vol II 1945-1985*. Ed. John Wakeman, H.W.Wilson co, NY, 1988.

During his teens he spent more than one summer working on farms, following the grain harvest north to Canada—experience that he later used in *Days of Heaven*. On graduating from Harvard, where he majored in philosophy, Malick went as a Rhodes scholar to Magdalen College, Oxford, but left without completing his thesis—his chosen topic having proved unacceptable to his tutor, Gilbert Ryle. Back in the States, he took up journalism, writing articles for *Life*, *Newsweek*, and the *New Yorker*, which sent him to Bolivia to cover the trial of Régis Debray.

In 1968 he was appointed to a lectureship in philosophy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but stayed only a year. "I was not a good teacher; I didn't have the sort of edge one should have on the students, so I decided to do something else." A course in filmmaking being taught by a colleague aroused Malick's interest. "I'd always liked movies in a kind of naive way. They seemed no less improbable a career than anything else." In the fall of 1969 he enrolled in the newly opened American Film Institute's Center For Advanced Studies in Beverly Hills, as a member of its first class of Fellows. While at the AFI—"a marvelous place"—he began scriptwriting to help finance his studies. "My wife was going to law school and I was working for a time as a rewrite man—two days on *Drive, He Said*, five weeks on . . . *Dirty Harry* at a time when Brando was going to do it. . . . Then we all got fired by Warners."

The subject matter of *Badlands* locates it squarely in the "outlaw couple on the run" tradition. . . . Two elements chiefly distinguish the film from its predecessors: one is its exceptional, even startling, visual beauty. Kit and Holly journey through landscapes and skylines, of ethereal dreamlike loveliness, amid which their bleak amorality comes to seem almost a part of the natural world around them.

Malick's masterstroke, though, and the key to *Badlands'* idiosyncratic originality, lies in his use of voice-over narrative. Events are presented to us from two ironically counterpointed angles: what we see on the screen and—in running monologue—Holly's commentary on that, confided to her diary in blandly ingenuous prose.

. . . Malick avoids any hint of didacticism, of psychological or sociological explication that could mar the smooth, ironic surface of his film. He also steers deliberately clear of nostalgia, though *Badlands* is carefully located in its 1959 setting. "The main reason for choosing the fifties was for its production values. . . . I wanted the period to be very much a background detail. . . . a time in the past. Nostalgia can give you a tin ear."

*Days of Heaven* (1978), Malick's second. . . film was seen by many critics as a reworking of his first. Once again there was a young couple on the run amid idyllically beautiful landscapes; once again on-screen events were counterpointed by a young female's naive voice-over narration. Once again, a period setting—this time 1916."

Working with a rather larger budget—2 ½ million [*Badlands* was \$335,000 plus plenty of deferments] and Nestor Almendros as cinematographer (Haskell Wexler took over when Almendros left to honor a prior commitment to Truffaut), Malick produced a film even more visually enchanting than *Badlands*. Reviewers were reminded of Millet, Wyeth, and the silent cinema of Sjöström and Murnau; a nocturnal sequence, when the fields are set alight to repel an onslaught of locusts, has been singled out as one of the most breathtakingly beautiful scenes ever filmed. The commentary emanates from Bill's young sister Linda; a shrewd nine-year-old (modeled on Daisy in Henry James' *What Daisy Knows*), she nonetheless fails to see everything, or understand everything she sees. As before, visuals and narration stand at an oblique angle to each other, setting up dissonant echoes that are not resolved by the dialogue—so sparse that Malick has called this almost a silent film.

Despite his modest disclaimers, Malick has shown in his two movies so far a highly personal, distinctive approach to filmmaking. James Monaco, discussing those contemporary American directors who attempt to lend their work a mythic dimension, observed that where others (he instanced Hal Ashby) induce myth, Malick deduces it. "Malick begins with the reality, then draws his impressively mythic material out of it. . . . This is obviously the modus operandi that will result in the most valid and affective movies." It may be, though, that to achieve its full resonance, mythic material requires a more visceral, tumultuous treatment than Malick's reticent irony can provide. In *Film Comment* (September-October 1978), Terry Curtis Fox described him as "the ultimate rational filmmaker, one whose every image is a perfectly considered idea, who cools each moment with the precision of his own sight." Hence, perhaps, the emotional hollowiness that some have detected beneath the visual and thematic richness of *Days of Heaven*—and that may indicate Malick's limitations as a filmmaker, for all the skill and intelligence of his achievement.

He was credited as Supervising Cameraman and Visual Consultant on George Lucas' *American Graffiti* (1973), and was one of the cinematographers on *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) and *Days of Heaven* (1978). Among his other feature credits: *Coming Home* (1978), *Richard Pryor Live on the Sunset Strip* (1982), *The Man Who Loved Women* (1977), and *Colors* (1988). He earned Oscar nominations for two very different period pieces, *Matewan* (1987) and *Blaze* (1989).

Always politically active, Wexler directed the Oscar-winning documentary *Interviews With My Lai Veterans* (1970), *Introduction to the Enemy* (1974, codirector), the fiction film *Latino* (1986), and was subpoenaed by a federal grand jury for the tapes and footage of *Underground* (1975), a chronicle of the Weather Underground movement. Critic John Simon, commenting on Wexler's Oscar-winning cinematography for *Bound for Glory* (1976), wrote, "The phrase 'Every frame is a work of art,' so recklessly bandied about by film reviewers, may very nearly apply here." Recent credits include *The Secret of Roan Inish* (1995).



### This was Roger Ebert's review, after he saw the film the second time:

Terence Malick's "Days of Heaven" has been praised for its painterly images and evocative score, but criticized for its muted emotions: Although passions erupt in a deadly love triangle, all the feelings are somehow held at arm's length. This observation is true enough, if you think only about the actions of the adults in the story. But watching this 1978 film again recently, I was struck more than ever with the conviction that this is the story of a teenage girl, told by her, and its subject is the way that hope and cheer have been beaten down in her heart. We do not feel the full passion of the adults because it is not her passion: It is seen at a distance, as a phenomenon, like the weather, or the plague of grasshoppers that signals the beginning of the end.

The film takes place during the years before World War I. Outside Chicago, Bill (Richard Gere) gets in a fight with a steel mill foreman and kills him. With his lover Abby (Brooke Adams) and his kid sister Linda (Linda Manz), he hops a train to Texas, where the harvest is in progress, and all three get jobs as laborers on the vast wheat field of a farmer (Sam Shepard). Bill tells everyone Abby is his sister, and gets in a fight with a field hand who suggests otherwise.

The farmer falls in love with Abby and asks her to stay after the harvest is over. Bill overhears a conversation between the farmer and a doctor, and learns that the farmer has perhaps a year to live. In a strategy familiar from "The Wings of the Dove," he suggests that Abby marry the farmer--and then, when he dies, he and Abby will at last have money enough to live happily. "He was tired of livin' like the rest of 'em, nosing around like a pig in a gutter," Linda confides on the soundtrack. But later she observes of the farmer: "Instead of getting sicker, he just stayed the same; the doctor must of give him some pills or something."

The farmer sees Bill and Abby in tender moments together, feels that is not the way a brother and sister should behave and challenges Bill. Bill leaves, hitching a ride with an aerial circus that has descended out of the sky. Abby, the farmer and Linda live happily for a year, and then Bill returns at harvest time. All of the buried issues boil up to the surface again, against a backdrop of biblical misfortune: a plague of grasshoppers, fields in flame, murder, loss, exile.

"Days of Heaven" is above all one of the most beautiful films ever made. Malick's purpose is not to tell a story of melodrama, but one of loss. His tone is elegiac. He evokes the loneliness and beauty of the limitless Texas prairie. In the first hour of the film there is scarcely a scene set indoors. The farm workers camp under the stars and work in the fields, and even the farmer is so besotted by the weather that he tinkers with wind instruments on the roof of his Gothic mansion.

The film places its humans in a large frame filled with natural details: the sky, rivers, fields, horses, pheasants, rabbits. Malick set many of its shots at the "golden hours" near dawn and dusk, when shadows are muted and the sky is all the same tone. These images are underlined by the famous score of Ennio Morricone, who quotes Saint-Saens' "Carnival of the Animals." The music is wistful, filled with loss and regret: in mood, like "The Godfather" theme but not so lush and more remembered than experienced. Voices are often distant, and there is far-off thunder.

Against this backdrop, the story is told in a curious way. We do see key emotional moments between the three adult characters. (Bill advises Abby to take the farmer's offer. The farmer and Abby share moments together in which she realizes she is beginning to love him, and Bill and the farmer have their elliptical exchanges in which neither quite states the obvious.) But all of their words together, if summed up, do not equal the total of the words in the voiceover spoken so hauntingly by Linda Manz.

She was 16 when the film was made, playing younger, with a face that sometimes looks angular and plain, but at other times (especially

in a shot where she is illuminated by firelight and surrounded by darkness) has a startling beauty. Her voice tells us everything we need to know about her character (and is so particular and unusual that we almost think it tells us about the actress, too). It is flat, resigned, emotionless, with some kind of quirky Eastern accent.

The whole story is told by her. But her words are not a narration so much as a parallel commentary, with asides and footnotes. We get the sense that she is speaking some years after the events have happened, trying to reconstruct these events that were seen through naive eyes. She is there in almost the first words of the film ("My brother used to tell everyone they were brother and sister," a statement that is more complex than it seems). And still there in the last words of the film, as she walks down the tracks with her new "best friend." She is there after the others are gone. She is the teller of the tale.

This child, we gather, has survived in hard times. She has armored herself. She is not surprised by the worst. Her voice sounds utterly authentic; it seems beyond performance. I remember seeing the film for the first time and being blind-sided by the power of a couple of sentences she speaks near the end. The three of them are in a boat on a river. Things have not worked out well. The days of heaven are over. She says: "You could see people on the shore, but it was far off and you couldn't see what they were doing. They were probably calling for help or something--or they were trying to bury somebody or something."

That is the voice of the person who tells the story, and that it why "Days of Heaven" is correct to present its romantic triangle obliquely, as if seen through an emotional filter. Children know that adults can be seized with sudden passions for one another, but children are concerned primarily with how these passions affect themselves: Am I more or less secure, more or less loved, because there has been this emotional realignment among the adults who form my world?

Since it was first released, "Days of Heaven" has gathered legends to itself. Malick, now 53, made "Badlands" with newcomers Sissy Spacek and Martin Sheen in 1973, made this film five years later and then disappeared from view. Because the film made such an impression, the fact of his disappearance took on mythic proportions. He was, one heard, living in Paris. Or San Francisco. Or Montana. Or Austin. He was dying. Or working on another film. Or on a novel, or a play. Right now Malick is back at work, with two projects, "The Thin Red Line," with Sean Penn, and "The Moviegoer," with Tim Robbins and Julia Roberts. Perhaps the mysteries will clear.

"Days of Heaven's" great photography has also generated a mystery. The credit for cinematography goes to the Cuban Nestor Almendros, who won an Oscar for the film; "Days of Heaven" established him in America, where he went on to great success. Then there is a small credit at the end: "Additional photography by Haskell Wexler." Wexler, too, is one of the greatest of all cinematographers. That credit has always rankled him, and he once sent me a letter in which he described sitting in a theater with a stopwatch to prove that more than half of the footage was shot by him. The reason he didn't get top billing is a story of personal and studio politics, but the fact remains that between them these two great cinematographers created a film whose look remains unmistakably in the memory.

What is the point of "Days of Heaven"--the payoff, the message? This is a movie made by a man who knew how something felt, and found a way to evoke it in us. That feeling is how a child feels when it lives precariously, and then is delivered into security and joy, and then has it all taken away again--and blinks away the tears and says it doesn't hurt.

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### Coming up next week, Tuesday December 4: epic fantasy to start the holiday season:

#### Terry Gilliam's *The Adventure of Baron Munchausen* 1988

There really was a Baron Munchausen, and he fought for the Russians against the Turks in the 18th century. A book was written about him by a jewel thief who may or may not have known him, and tales about him circulated orally as folklore. There may be some truth in some of the tales but—who cares? Terry Gilliam has woven a delightful rambling narrative about the fantastic Baron and he has populated it with grand characters played by John Neville, Eric Idle, Robin Williams, Uma Thurman, Sting, Jonathan Price, and others. Gilliam, who was the American member of Monty Python's Flying Circus, the great British television and later film team of the 1970s and 1980s, says that Munchausen is the third part of a trilogy, the other two parts of which are *Time Bandits* (1981) and *Brazil* (1985). Does that matter? Probably not. This is a grand and hilarious movie, a rollicking and imaginative end to the fourth in this series of terrific movies.

#### A REALLY SPECIAL MOVIE THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN TOMORROW NIGHT

*A Matter of Life & Death (Stairway to Heaven)* will show at The Amherst Theater 3500 Main Street on Wednesday November 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:30. Introduced by Diane Christian.

This 1946 Archers classic in spectacular Technicolor has some of the finest filmically sensitive fantasy effects in film history. (Diane thinks this outshines Spielberg and Lucas.) David Niven stars in his finest role as a pilot-poet who misses his date with death, falls in love and fights his fate. Marius Goring is the French aristocratic Conductor 71 who misses his man due to English fog. Kim Hunter is the American WAC who hears the pilot's last words as he bails out of his fiery plane without a chute and falls in love with his gallant English spirit. Does the pilot suffer heavenly hallucinations from a brain tumor or is he really in a fight for his life with a heavenly court and order? Michael Powell, (who, with Emeric Pressburger, wrote, directed and produced as "The Archers") said he disapproved of the American release title *Stairway to Heaven*. "They saw it all as a fairy tale," he said, "I saw it as a surgical operation." Imagination and reason come together in this extraordinary film.

#### WHAT DO TO WITH YOUR TUESDAY EVENINGS ONE MONTH AFTER THE WINTER SOLSTICE

Here is our tentative list of films for Spring '02. We're still checking on availability, so there may be some changes before we start up with BFS V on Tuesday, January 22. The penultimate film in that series, *The Long Good Friday*, is a great gangster movie with superb performances by Bob Hopkins and Helen Mirren, and a young Pierce Brosnan as an IRA thug, but British mobsters and Irish hitmen are no way to head into the summer. So we're varying our usual pattern of screening the films chronologically by ending the series with one of the best movie comedies ever made, Billy Wilder's *Some Like it Hot*. It's got great performances by Marilyn Monroe, Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon and Joe E. ("Nobody's perfect") Brown. It's timeless.

Jan 22 Mervyn Le Roy, *Little Caesar* 1930  
Jan 29 Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, *I Know Where I'm Going* 1945  
Feb 5 David Lean, *Great Expectations* 1946  
Feb 12 Akira Kurosawa, *Rashomon*, 1950  
Feb 19 Satyajit Ray, *Pather Panchali* 1955  
Feb 26 Alfred Hitchcock, *Vertigo* 1958  
March 5 Jean-Luc Godard, *Breathless* 1959  
March 12 John Ford, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* 1962  
March 19 John Boorman, *Point Blank* 1967  
April 2 Stanley Kubrick, *Barry Lyndon* 1975  
April 9 Luchino Visconti, *The Innocent* 1976  
April 16 Yasujiro Ozu, *Floating Weeds* 1979  
April 23 John Mackenzie, *The Long Good Friday* 1980  
April 30 Billy Wilder, *Some Like it Hot* 1959



#### THIS COMING SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2, IN THE MAFAC SUNDAY CLASSICS: IT'S UPWARD MOBILITY IN SICILY, LITTLE ITALY, AND TAHOE

Every Sunday at 3:00 p.m., the Market Arcade presents a different great film in its Sunday Classics series, curated by M. Faust, who introduces the films. This Sunday (December 2) it's Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather Part II* (1974). This compelling sequel lives up to the brilliance of *The Godfather*, contrasting the life of Corleone father and son. In parallel story lines the movie traces the problems of a matured Michael Corleone (Al Pacino) in 1958 and that of young immigrant Vito Corleone (Robert De Niro) in 1917's *Hell's Kitchen*. Vito is introduced to a life of crime by two-bit hood Clemenza (Bruno Kirby) while Michael survives an attempt on his life, familial betrayals, and Senate hearings...but at a cost. De Niro, speaking almost completely in Italian, is charismatic as the young Don, a Robin Hood-type figure. For a complete schedule with descriptions of each film visit <http://www.sundayclassics.com>.

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For notes and links for each film and for the goldenrod handouts in Adobe Acrobat, visit our website: [www.buffalofilmseminars.com](http://www.buffalofilmseminars.com).

Email DIANE CHRISTIAN AT [engdc@acsu.buffalo.edu](mailto:engdc@acsu.buffalo.edu) email BRUCE JACKSON AT [bjackson@buffalo.edu](mailto:bjackson@buffalo.edu). For BFS SCHEDULES and information, with notes and links for each film, visit our website: <http://www.buffalofilmseminars.com>