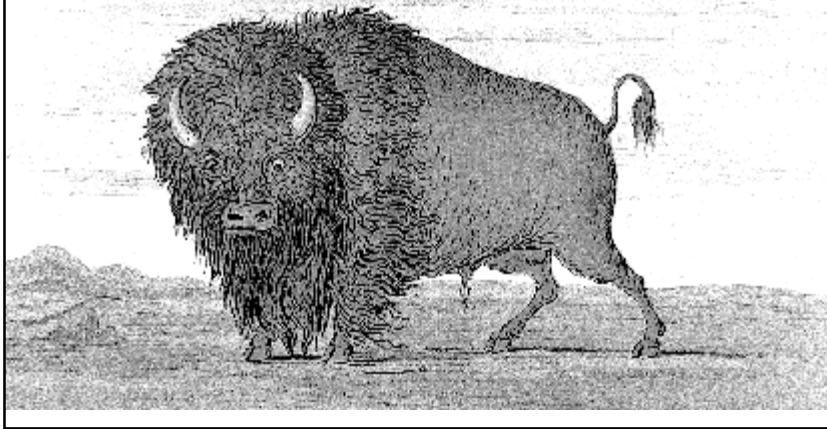


The Buffalo Film Seminars



Conversations about great films with Diane Christian & Bruce Jackson

JOHN CASSAVETES (9 December 1929, New York City—3 February 1989, Los Angeles, cirrhosis of the liver) directed two episodes of "Columbo" using the pseudonym "Nick Colasanto," and several episodes of the "Shaft" tv series. Under his own name, he directed 15 films (and wrote the screenplays for most of them), among them *Big Trouble* (1985), *Love Streams* (1984), *Gloria* (1980), *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie* (1976), *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974), *Minnie and Moskowitz* (1971), *Husbands* (1970), *A Child Is Waiting* (1963), and *Shadows* (1959). He acted in about three dozen films, among them *Love Streams* (1984), *I'm Almost Not Crazy: John Cassavetes - the Man and His Work* (1984), *Tempest* (1982), *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* (1981), *The Fury* (1978), *Mikey and Nicky* (1976), *Two Minute Warning* (1976), *Capone* (1975), *Husbands* (1970), *If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium* (1969), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), *The Killers* (1964), *A Child Is Waiting*, *A* (1963), *Shadows* (1959), *Crime in the Streets* (1956), and *Taxi* (1953). He acted in many of early television's great dramatic series, going back to 1947, including "The Fugitive," "The Virginian," "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea," "Burke's Law," "The Alfred Hitchcock Hour," "Dr. Kildare," "Rawhide," "Studio One," "United States Steel Hour," Goodyear Television Playhouse, "The United States Steel Hour," "Philco Television Playhouse," "Kraft Television Theater," and "You Are There: The Death of Socrates."

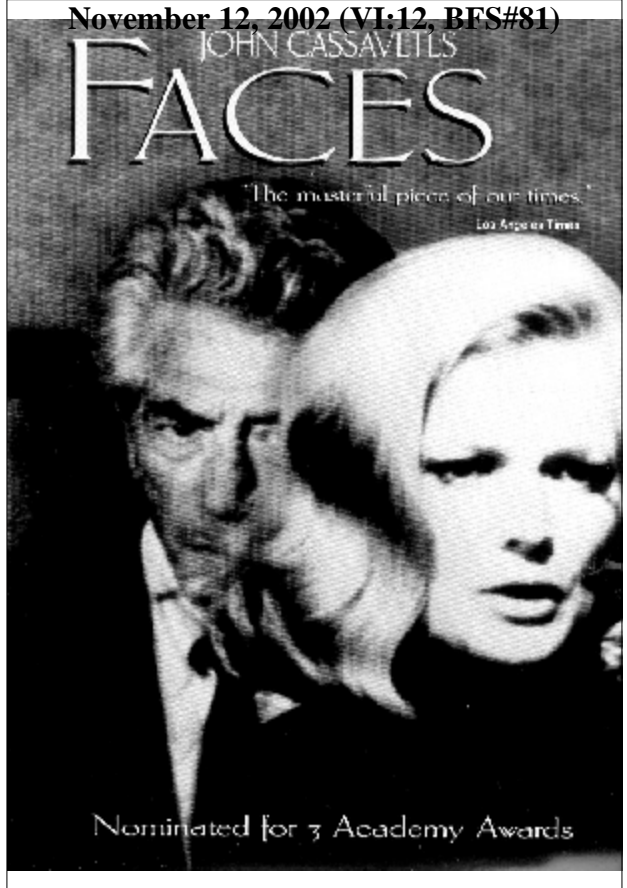
JOHN MARLEY (17 October 1907, New York City—22 May 1984, Los Angeles County) is perhaps best known to modern audience for his portrayal of the racehorse-owning Hollywood producer Jack Woltz in *The Godfather* (1972). His last film was *On the Edge* (1985). Some of his others were *Hooper* (1978), *The Greatest* (1977), *Love Story* (1970), *Cat Ballou* (1965), *America, America* (1963), *A Child Is Waiting* (1963), *I Want to Live!* (1958), *My Six Convicts* (1952), *The Naked City* (1948), *Kiss of Death* (1947), and *Native Land* (1942). He appeared on many tv series: "Hardcastle and McCormick," "SCTV Network 90" (playing "Leonard Bernstein" in episode: "The Godfather"), "The Incredible Hulk" "Vega\$," "Kolchak: The Night Stalker," "Petrocelli," "Medical Center," "Cannon," "The F.B.I.," "The Bill Cosby Show," "Hawaii Five-O," "Bonanza," "The Virginian," "The Wild, Wild West," "Gunsmoke," "Laredo," "The Alfred Hitchcock Hour," "The Twilight Zone," "The Outer Limits," "Dr. Kildare," "Perry Mason," "The Untouchables" "Hawaiian Eye," "Rawhide," "Sea Hunt" and "Believe It or Not" (1949). He was nominated for a Best Supporting Actor Oscar for his role in *Love Story*.

GENA ROWLANDS (Virginia Cathryn Rowlands, 19 June 1930, Cambria, Wisconsin) most recently appeared in *The Incredible Mrs. Ritchie* (2002). She appeared in about 60 other theatrical and made-for-tv films and on several tv series, among them *Hysterical Blindness* (2002), *Cassavetes: Anything for John* (1995), *Something to Talk About* (1995), *Another Woman* (1988), *The Betty*

November 12, 2002 (VI:12, BFS#81)

JOHN CASSAVETES FACES

The masterful piece of our times
Los Angeles Times



Nominated for 3 Academy Awards

FACES (1968) 130 minutes

Directed and written by John Cassavetes
Produced by John Cassavetes, Maurice McEndree
Music by Jack Ackerman and Charlie Smalls
Cinematography by Maurice McEndree and Al Ruban
Edited by John Cassavetes, Maurice McEndree, Al Ruban
Production assistant...Steven Spielberg

John Marley....Richard Forst
Gena Rowlands....Jeannie Rapp
Lynn Carlin....Maria Forst
Seymour Cassel....Chet
Fred Draper....Freddie
Val Avery....Jim McCarthy
Dorothy Gulliver....Florence
Jerry Howard, Carolyn Fleming, Don Kraatz,
John Hale, Midge Ware, Kay Michaels , Laurie
Mock, Christina Crawford, Ann Shirley, Anita
White, James Bridges, Edwin Sirianni, David
Rowlands, Dave Mazzie, Darlene Conley (Billy
Mae) , Julie Gambol, Liz Satriano, Gene Darfler
(Joe Jackson) , Elizabeth Deering (Stella) , O.G.
Dunn (Comedian) , Joanne Moore Jordan (Louise)
, George Sims (Bartender) , Charles Akins

Ford Story (1987), Love Streams (1984), Tempest (1982), Gloria (1980), The Brink's Job (1978), Two Minute Warning (1976), A Woman Under the Influence (1974), Minnie and Moskowitz (1971), A Child Is Waiting (1963), and Lonely Are the Brave (1962). She also did a lot of regular tv work on such series as "Marcus Welby, M.D.," "Medical Center," "Kraft Suspense Theatre," "Burke's Law," "The Alfred Hitchcock Hour," "Dr. Kildare," "Breaking Point," "Bob Hope Presents the Chrysler Theatre," "Kraft Suspense Theatre," "The Virginian," "Bonanza," "77 Sunset Strip," "The Dick Powell Show," "The Tab Hunter Show," "Laramie," "General Electric Theater," "Goodyear Television Playhouse," "The United States Steel Hour," "Studio One," "Armstrong Circle Theatre," "Kraft Television Theatre," "Goodyear Television Playhouse," and "Robert Montgomery Presents" (1950). She was nominated for Best Actress Oscars for Gloria (1980) and A Woman Under the Influence (1974). She was nominated for four and won two Emmys.

LYNN CARLIN (Lynn Kramer, 31 January 1938, Los Angeles) last appeared in the made-for-tv drama "A Killer in the Family" (1983). With only a few exceptions, all of her other work was in tv series or tv films. She received a Best Supporting Actress Oscar nomination for her work in Faces.

SEYMOUR CASSEL (22 January 1935, Detroit) first appeared in an uncredited role in Cassavetes' Shadows (1959) and most recently in The Burial Society (2002). He's been in about 100 other films, many of them dreadful, some of them interesting. Some of each are: Stealing Harvard (2002), The Royal Tenenbaums (2001), Manna From Heaven (2001), Temps (1999), Rushmore (1998), Dream for an Insomniac (1998), Relax... It's Just Sex (1998), Obsession (1997), When Pigs Fly (1993), In the Soup (1992), Diary of a Hitman (1991), Dick Tracy (1990), Colors (1988), Tin Men (1987), Love Streams (1984), Convoy (1978), The Killing of a Chinese Bookie (1976), The Last Tycoon (1976), Minnie and Moskowitz (1971), Coogan's Bluff (1968), The Killers (1964) and Murder, Inc. (1960).

VAL AVERY (14 July 1924, Philadelphia) appeared in about 75 films, most recently In the Shadows (2001). Some others: Donnie Brasco (1997), Cobra (1986), The Pope of Greenwich Village (1984), Continental Divide (1981), Gloria (1980), Brubaker (1980), The Amityville Horror (1979), Love and Bullets (1979), Wanderers, The (1979), Cheech and Chong's Up in Smoke (1978), The Killing of a Chinese Bookie, The (1976), Harry and Walter Go to New York (1976), The Laughing Policeman, The (1973), Papillon (1973), Minnie and Moskowitz (1971), The Anderson Tapes, The (1971), Hombre (1967), Nevada Smith (1966), The Hallelujah Trail (1965),

from PBS American Masters:

John Cassavetes was born in New York City on December 9th, 1929. After graduating from high school, he attended Mohawk College and Colgate University before graduating from the New York Academy of Dramatic Arts in 1950. Throughout the early 1950s he worked as an actor in films including FOURTEEN HOURS (1951) and TAXI (1953). By the late 1950s he had made a name for himself, with roles in a number of movies including 1958's SADDLE THE WIND. His big break came with a regular role on the television series "Johnny Staccato" between 1959 and 1960.

Winning five awards from the Venice Film Festival, Cassavetes found himself suddenly in the position of making higher-budget films within the studio system. In 1961 he made TOO LATE BLUES followed in 1962 by A CHILD IS WAITING, but neither had the excitement or improvisational energy of SHADOWS. Resentful of studio interference in his work, Cassavetes went back to acting, appearing in a number of films including THE KILLERS (1964), THE DIRTY DOZEN (1967), and ROSEMARY'S BABY (1968). By 1968, however, Cassavetes returned to directing, this time working independently.

FACES, a film about the difficulties in a suburban marriage, continued in the vein of SHADOWS, with a loosely drawn

Hud (1963), Requiem for a Heavyweight (1962), The Magnificent Seven (1960). He also did a lot of tv episode work: "Law & Order," "Hunter," "Moonlighting," "Cagney & Lacey," "Hardcastle and McCormick," "Quincy," "The Hardy Boys/Nancy Drew Mysteries," "Starsky and Hutch," "Baretta," "Barnaby Jones," "Kojak," "The Odd Couple," "Mission: Impossible," "The F.B.I.," "Nichols," "Cannon," "Mission: Impossible," "Mannix," "Gunsmoke," "Lancer," "The Wild, Wild West," "Dragnet 1967," "The Fugitive," "Laredo," "Felony Squad," "The Virginian," "Get Smart," "Daniel Boone," "The Munsters," "The Defenders," "Naked City," "Rawhide," "The Untouchables," "Bonanza," "Zane Grey Theater," and "Robert Montgomery Presents" (1950)

MAURICE MCENDREE acted in Devil's Angels (1967), Hollywood Nudes Report (1963) and A Pair of Boots (1962). He was editor or co-editor of this film, 1000 Shapes of a Female (1963) and Shadows (1959). He was the writer of Bunny Yeager's Nude Las Vegas (1964). He played Juan in Laredo (1965), the First Bellboy in "The Virginian" (1962) and an Operative in "Perry Mason" 1957. This is his only cinematographer credit.

AL RUBAN was producer, executive producer or producer of Texasville (1990), Happy New Year (1987), Opening Night (1977), The Killing of a Chinese Bookie (1976), Minnie and Moskowitz (1971), Husbands (1970), Faces (1968), and The Beautiful, the Bloody, and the Bare (1964). He is listed as cinematographer for Love Streams (1984), Vértigo en Manhattan (1980), David (1979), Opening Night (1977), The Killing of a Chinese Bookie (1976) and Faces (1968).

Financing his first film with the money he had made in television, Cassavetes embarked on his directorial debut. Working from only a skeleton script, SHADOWS was an experiment in improvisational acting and directing. A low-budget sixteen millimeter production with a jazz soundtrack by Charles Mingus, the film appealed to an audience longing for less mediated art forms.

script and cinematography that worked in response to the improvised method of the actors. Though some found the work tedious (unscripted scenes going on far longer than Hollywood would have allowed), many realized in Cassavetes the possibility for more genuine and moving moments. After FACES, Cassavetes embarked on HUSBANDS, in which he starred with Peter Falk and Ben Gazzara. The film centered around three friends dealing with life and mortality after the death of a mutual friend.

Though neither FACES nor HUSBANDS were very popular with the mainstream moviegoing audience, both were pivotal in the integration of cinema vérité traditions in future Hollywood films. This crossover of the experimental and

popular was clear in Cassavetes' most successful film. Though *A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE* (1974) was produced with a complete script, it retained much of the intuitive and spontaneous acting of Cassavetes' earlier films. Starring Gena Rowlands and Peter Falk, the film investigated the mental illness of a woman and the disintegration of her marriage. Financed independently by the cast and crew, *A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE* was a popular and critical success.

from *World Film Directors, V. II*, Ed. John Wakeman. H.W. Wilson Co., NY, 1986.

Cassavetes' ambitions went beyond profitable assignments in routine entertainments. He always "wanted to express things that I think may be of value," and was "concerned with the problems confronting real people." . . . It was this that brought him into "this ridiculous business" of filmmaking.

Both the story and the dialogue of *Shadows* were improvised by the cast who gave their names to the characters they play. . . . The film was made intermittently over a period of two years. The cameraman, Eric Kollmar, used a 16mm hand-held camera, and the picture acquired a grainy quality when it was blown up into 35mm. The dialogue was recorded live and synchronized later, backed by the jazz of Charlie Mingus. Unable to interest American distributors, Cassavetes sent *Shadows* to Europe, where it was welcomed enthusiastically as a pioneering triumph of *cinéma vérité*, a harbinger of an American New Wave. . . . For those who wanted to crown him as the American Godard, Cassavetes responded unhelpfully that credit for the film belonged to the actors: "The director is the most expendable person in the film. If you have a good script and good actors, all the director has to do is aim the camera and keep things going."

He regards himself as an "amateur" director but a "professional" actor, prepared to appear in good, bad, or indifferent productions so that he can afford the luxury of making his own films in his own way, from his own scripts.

In 1965, Cassavetes had written the first draft of *Faces*, about a middle-aged, middle-class couple whose marriage has become a comfortable pattern of habits that do not include communication, and what happens when they discover this. Unlike *Shadows*, the film was acted by experienced professionals (John Marley and Linda Carlin as the couple Dick and Maria, and Cassavetes' wife Gena Rowlands as the call girl Jeannie). Though they worked with a fully written script, Cassavetes allowed them an exceptional degree of autonomy in their interpretation of his lines, sometimes revising dialogue to fit a role more closely to the actor's sense of it. The effect is almost as free and spontaneous as with the improvisations of

from *The St. James Film Directors Encyclopedia*. Ed. Andrew Sarris. Visible Ink, Detroit, 1998, entry by Bill Wine.

Cassavetes' style centers around a freedom afforded his actors to share in the creative process. Cassavetes' scripts serve as sketchy blueprints for the performers' introspective explorations and emotional embellishments. Consequently, camera movements, at the command of the actors' intuitive behavior, are of necessity spontaneous.

The amalgam of improvisational acting, hand-held camera work, grainy stock, loose editing, and threadbare plot give his films a texture of recreated rather than heightened reality, often imbuing them with a feeling of astonishing psychodramatic intensity as characters confront each other and lay bare their souls. Detractors, however, see Cassavetes as too dedicated to the performers' art and too trusting of the actor's self-discipline. They charge that the result is too often a mild form of aesthetic anarchy.

Throughout the late 1970s and into the 1980s, Cassavetes continued to work as both an actor and director. He directed *THE KILLING OF A CHINESE BOOKIE* (1976), *OPENING NIGHT* (1977), and the 1980 film *GLORIA* which again starred Gina Rowlands, and which many believe was one of her finest performances. By the time of his death in 1989, Cassavetes had directed twelve films, creating a body of work that addressed serious topics and paved the way for a more vibrant American cinema.

Shadows, and the director's subsequent films have been made in the same way.

Shooting again in 16mm (Later blown up to 35mm), Cassavetes spent eight months filming *Faces* and something like two years on the editing.

Diane Jacobs wrote that "the extravagant physical gestures and child play which appeared first in *Shadows* are redoubled in *Faces*. Maria masks her confusion with a high-pitched laugh. Jeannie communicates with Dick in nursery rhymes. . . . Cassavetes intensifies the isolation of each character by cutting from one to the other, rarely portraying both husband and wife in the same frame. As they laugh at ostensibly shared jokes, the camera jolts uneasily." Alex Ross called *Faces* "the longest, most ambitious, most brilliant home movie ever made. . . . Somehow Cassavetes has captured the texture of actual life on film."

Husbands, which followed in 1970, is the only one of Cassavetes' films in which he has given himself a major role. . . . Cassavetes himself said that "*Husbands* is about feelings and sentiment, and sentiment is selfish. We try to prove that selfishness is important, a way to stay sensitive."

Diane Jacobs has described Cassavetes as "the father of the new Hollywood," saying that his "fascination with realism and the actor-based narrative set the stage for the 'personal' styles of the school of directors that invaded Hollywood over a decade later." Many of the young directors have acknowledged this influence.

For Jacobs, "it is in the shady area between life and fiction that Cassavetes' films are both most effective and most disquieting—less than myth and more than fact. . . . Eschewing metaphor on the one hand and the painterly image. . . on the other, Cassavetes' myopic lens denies man the option of either escape or of metaphysical redemption. . . It is Cassavetes' belief in the spontaneity of emotions and his unswerving integrity in evoking them that elevate his films beyond moments of improvisation." The director himself says: "I am more interested in the people who work with me than in the film itself or in cinema."

As his career progressed, Cassavetes changed his thematic concerns, upgraded his technical production values, and, not surprisingly attracted a wider audience—but without overhauling his actor-as-auteur approach.

Faces represented Cassavetes's return to his favored semi-documentary style, complete with the seemingly obligatory excesses and gaffes. But the film also contained moments of truth and exemplary acting. Not only did this highly charged drama about the disintegration of middle-class marriage in affluent Southern California find favor with the critical and filmmaking communities, it broke through as one of the first independent films to find a sizeable audience among the general moviegoing public.

“People who are making films today are too concerned with mechanics—technical things instead of feeling,” Cassavetes from *Going Steady*. **Pauline Kael**. **Atlantic Monthly Press**. **Boston, 1970**.

Cassavetes’ people are empty, lecherous middle-aged failures, like Benjamin’s parents and their friends in “The Graduate,” seen not in terms of comedy but in terms of bitterness and despair—a confirmation of the audience’s anxieties. The theme of “Faces” is exactly the same as that of many now fashionable films—sex as the last quest for meaning in this meaningless, godless, etc., life, or “We who are about to die want to try everything.” But the aging people and the Los Angeles setting (which, of course, makes it all seem suburban) have the ghastliness and monotonousness of the commonplace. . . . “Faces” makes a sacrament of throwing up modern life and American society. Like a number of new forms of theatre, “Faces” is being taken as a religious experience. It’s almost a form of self-flagellation to go to a movie like this—“to see yourself,” which, of course, means to see how awful you are.

from *Peter Bogdanovich’s Movie of the Week*. **Ballantine Books, NY, 1999**.

Cassavetes certainly was a director like no other, and, contrary to popular conception he also (except for *Shadows*, which was improvised) wrote all his own scripts. John was our most revolutionary filmmaker, whose restless and uncompromising vision remains vividly contemporary, challenging, provocative, and at its heart, darkly lyrical. If there was ever an American Jean Renoir, Cassavetes was the one.

Key Moments In Vérité History (National Film Board of Canada)

1919 Russian filmmaker **Dziga Vertov** issues a manifesto calling for a new style of cinematographic reportage that documents real life. However, the technology to make his vision real won't come into being for several decades.

1922 Robert Flaherty combines observational filming with dramatic story to make *Nanook of the North*, the first documentary about real life.

1935 Fourteen-year-old **Richard Leacock** shoots *Canary Island Bananas*, about life on his father's plantation. **Flaherty** sees it, and tells **Leacock** they will someday work together.

1955 The first Free Cinema program is screened, launching this short-lived (1956-58) British movement against old-style documentaries and commercial cinema.

1958 The NFB's Unit B begins production of *Candid Eye* — 13 half-hour films, many of which demonstrate the new ideas of what will come to be called *cinéma vérité*, or direct cinema.

Michel Brault and **Gilles Groulx** shoot *Les Raquetteurs*, a proto-*vérité* film with some footage in synch. **Stefan Kudelski** invents the Nagra III portable tape recorder, which will become the workhorse of *vérité* production.

1959 Brault screens *Les Raquetteurs* at a Flaherty seminar in California, where he meets **Jean Rouch**. **Rouch** invites him to shoot his next film, *Chronique d'un été*.

1960 Rouch releases *Chronique d'un été*. In honour of **Dziga Vertov**, he names this new style of filmmaking *cinéma vérité* — a direct translation of Vertov's term, *Kino Pravda*. **Leacock** and **Donn Pennebaker** use parts from a Bulova watch to modify and synchronize a 16mm Auricon camera and Nagra tape recorder. They use this system to shoot *Primary*.

1962 Albert Maysles leaves Drew Associates to form a company with his brother, **David**. Their greatest *vérité* film will be the feature *Salesman*.

1963 Michel Brault and **Pierre Perrault** make the feature *Pour la suite du monde* — the NFB's most ambitious foray into direct cinema. **Leacock** and **Pennebaker** leave **Drew Associates** to form their own company and continue making *vérité* films. Their best-known release is the seminal Bob Dylan rockumentary *Don't Look Back*. John F. Kennedy, subject of *Primary* and *Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment*, is assassinated. The *cinéma vérité* movement

told an interviewer in 1980. “Execution is about eight percent to me. The technical quality of a film doesn’t have much to do with whether it’s a good film.”

1946 Robert Drew is the subject of a *Life* story about jet pilots, and comes up with the idea of making photojournalistic motion pictures. *Life* hires him as a writer.

1953 National Film Board of Canada filmmaker **Wolf Koenig** is given a copy of photographer **Henri Cartier-Bresson's** book *The Decisive Moment* for Christmas. The book inspired Koenig to launch the *Candid Eye* series.

1954 Leacock shoots *Jazz Dance*, experimenting with several cameras to give the illusion of mobile synchronized sound.

loses its most prominent proponent.

1964 Debut of *This Hour Has Seven Days*, ground-breaking current affairs show produced by **Doug Leiterman** and **Patrick Watson**, that will air many *vérité* segments, including **Beryl Fox's** powerful *The Mills of the Gods*.

1967 Jean-Pierre Beauviala invents the lightweight, highly portable crystal synch sound-recording system. **Fred Wiseman** makes *Titicut Follies*, a portrait of life in a Massachusetts institution for the criminally insane. The film will be banned for 25 years, on the charge that it violates the privacy of the subjects. **Allan King** films *Warrendale* at a school for disturbed children. Both the CBC (which commissioned it) and BBC refuse to show the explosive film.

1976 Barbara Kopple's *Harlan County, USA* wins an Oscar for best feature-length documentary.

1981 MTV launches, bringing the shaky hand-held camera style to a whole new generation of viewers.

1982 Claude Lanzmann releases *Shoah*, his nine-and-a-half-hour oral history of the Holocaust. Sony's Betacam — a single-unit inch broadcast-use camera — hits the market.

1984 Release of *This is Spinal Tap*, a hilarious *vérité*-style "mockumentary" about a fictional heavy metal band.

1990 America's Funniest Home Videos premieres on ABC-TV — the first of what will become a torrent of reality-based shows.

1999 *The Blair Witch Project*, a faux *vérité* documentary, grosses over \$100 million US.

(All of the above have links:

<http://www.nfb.ca/cinemaverite/english/index.html>)

Join us next Tuesday, November 19, for Sam Peckinpah's, **THE WILD BUNCH**, 1969, with William Holden, Ernest Borgnine, Warren Oates, Robert Ryan, Edmund O'Brian, Strother Martin and L.Q. Jones. Roger Ebert calls it "one of the great defining moments in modern movies."

And next Wednesday, November 20, at the Amherst Theater, 7:30 p.m.

Diane will introduce a special screening of **A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH** (U.S. release title **STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN**), 1946.

The Archers' 'subversive masterpiece,' starring David Niven and Kim Hunter.

Check out the other BFS films, past films, and all the goldenrod handouts at <http://buffalofilmseminars.com>.

Write Diane at engdc@acsu.buffalo.edu.

Write Bruce at bjackson@buffalo.edu.

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