

## THE BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GREAT FILMS WITH BRUCE JACKSON & DIANE CHRISTIAN

PRESENTED BY THE UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO AND THE MARKET ARCADE FILM AND ARTS CENTER

### APRIL 3, 2001 (III:11): THE FRENCH CONNECTION (1971)

**WILLIAM FRIEDKIN** (29 August 1939, Chicago) began his career at 16 in the mailroom of WGN-TV in Chicago. Within months was a studio floor manager, in less than a year was directing live broadcasts. He was fired by several tv stations in Chicago area but in 8 years as TV director he made around 2,000 programs—local live broadcasts, educational programs, network dramas and musical shows. Friedkin made three interesting films – *The French Connection* 1971 (for which he won a Best Director Oscar), *The Exorcist* 1973 (for which he was nominated for Best Director), and a grubby T-men vs attractive Counterfeiter movie starring Willem Dafoe as the counterfeiter and that master of retarded motion William L. Peterson as the T-man, *To Live and Die in LA* 1985. (Not quite everybody hated it: the film won the audience award at the 1986 Cognac Festival du Film Policier.) He also directed several dogs: the much-hyped and deservedly panned *Jade* 1995, *Cruising* 1980 (for which he won the 1980 Razzie award for Worst Director), and an unnecessary and unsuccessful remake of Clouzot's great *La Salaire de la peur* (*Wages of Fear*) 1953, *Sorcerer* 1977, which starred Roy Scheider. (John Huston used to say he thought it silly to try to remake a great film because unless you got really lucky, you had nowhere to go but down. In *Sorcerer*, Friedkin did n't get lucky.) Friedkin's most memorable work since the early '70s has been on tv, notably in HBO's "Tales from the Crypt" and "The Twilight Zone." Friedkin has consistently married within the industry: actress Jeanne Moreau (1977-79), actress Lesley-Anne Down (1982-85), tv anchorwoman Kelly Lange (1987-1990), Paramount executive Sherry Lansing.

**ERNEST TIDYMAN** (1 January 1928, Cleveland, Ohio – 14 July 1984 complications from a perforated ulcer) won an Academy Award for his *French Connection* script. He was one of the few white people to win an NAACP Image Award (for his Shaft novels) He also wrote the script for Clint Eastwood's ghostly *High Plains Drifter* 1972 and several made-for-tv films.

**OWEN ROIZMAN** (22 September 1936, Brooklyn) shot one film before *The French Connection*, Bill Gunn's *Stop* 1970. We don't know anything about it either. Some of his 22 other films are far more memorable: *Wyatt Earp* 1994, *Grand Canyon* 1991, *Havana* 1990, *Tootsie* 1982, *Taps* 1981, *Absence of Malice* 1981, *True Confessions* 1981, *The Electric Horseman* 1979, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* 1978, *Straight Time* 1978, *Network* 1976, *Three Days of the Condor* 1975, *The Stepford Wives* 1975, *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three* 1974, *The Exorcist* 1973. He was nominated for 5 best cinematography Oscars: *Wyatt Earp*, *Tootsie*, *Network*, *The Exorcist*, and *The French Connection*. In 1997, his fellow cinematographers voted him the American Society of Cinematographers' Lifetime Achievement Award.

**GENE HACKMAN** (30 January 1930, San Bernardino, California) won best actor and best supporting actor Oscars (*The French Connection*, *Unforgiven* 1992), and was nominated two other times for best actor (*I Never Sang for My Father* 1970, *Mississippi Burning* 1988) and one other time for best supporting actor (for his role as Buck Barrow in *Bonnie and Clyde* 1967). He appears in five 2001 films: *Behind Enemy Lines*, *The Royal Tennenbaums*, *The Heist*, *Heartbreakers* and *The Mexican*. Some of his other notable roles were in *Absolute Power* 1997, *Get Shorty* 1995, *Crimson Tide* 1995, *Wyatt Earp* 1994, *The Firm* 1993, *No Way Out* 1987, *Superman I, II & IV* (1978, 1980, 1987), *Hoosiers* 1986, *Under Fire* 1983, *Reds* 1981, *Night Moves* 1975, *French Connection II* 1975, *The Conversation* 1974, *Young Frankenstein* 1974, *Scarecrow* 1973, and *Lilith* 1964. He was the first choice to play Mike Brady on "The Brady Bunch" and Hannibal Lector in "Silence of the Lambs" (but didn't) and the sixth choice to play Popeye Doyle in *The French Connection* (and did).

**FERNANDO REY** (Fernando Casado Arambillet, 20 September 1917, La Coruña, Spain – 9 March 1994, Madrid, Spain, cancer) appeared in nearly 250 films,

#### THE FRENCH CONNECTION

1971, 104 minutes, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox

D'Antoni Productions

**Gene Hackman** Jimmy 'Popeye' Doyle

**Fernando Rey** Alain Charnier

**Roy Scheider** Buddy Russo

**Tony Lo Bianco** Sal Boca

**Marcel Bozzuffi** Pierre Nicoli

**Fredric de Pasquale** Devereaux

**Bill Hickman** Mulderig

**Ann Rebbot** Marie Charnier

**Harold Gary** Weinstock

**Arlene Farber** Angie Boca

**Eddie Egan** Simonson

**Andr Ernotte** La Valle

**Sonny Grosso** Klein

**Director** William Friedkin

**Script** Ernest Tidyman,  
based on Robin Moore's novel

**Producer** Philip D'Antoni

**Executive producer** G. David Schine  
(yes, that one)

**Cinematographer** Owen Roizman

**Film Editor** Gerald B. Greenberg

**Sound** Christopher Newman, Theodore  
Soderberg

**Bill Hickman** stunt co-ordinator

**Eddie Egan** technical advisor

**Sonny Grosso** technical advisor

among them Buñuel's *That Obscure Object of Desire* 1977, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* 1972, *Tristana* 1970, and *Viridiana* 1961, Wertmüller's *Seven Beauties* 1976, and Welles' *Chimes at Midnight* 1966.

**ROY SCHEIDER** (10 November 1932, Orange, New Jersey) appeared in several forgettable films then had two terrific parts in 1970: *The French Connection* (for which he received a best supporting actor Oscar nomination) and *Klute*. He has acted regularly in films ever since, though in the last decade he is probably better known for his role as Captain Nathan Bridger in Steven Spielberg's tv series, "SeaQuest DSV". Some of his other films: *Romeo Is Bleeding* 1993, *The Russia House* 1990, *All That Jazz* 1979, *Jaws 2* 1978, *Sorcerer* 1977, *Marathon Man* 1976, *Jaws* 1975. He walked out of the role of Michael in *The Deer Hunter* (the role that made De Niro famous) because he did not believe that the character would travel around the world to find his friend.

**BILL HICKMAN** (1920 – 24 February 1986, Indio, California, cancer) does Hackman's driving in this film, sometimes hitting 90 mph on Brooklyn streets, with Friedkin in the car operating the camera. He was the badguy driving the black Dodge Charger 440 Magnum in *Bullitt* 1968.

**EDDIE EGAN** (3 January 1930, New York, New York – 4 November 1995, Miami, Florida, (cancer), a tough New York cop nicknamed "Popeye" who played tough cops on several tv series and in several films. His exploits with **SONNY GROSSO**, particularly the 112-pound \$32 million French Connection drug bust in 1962, inspired Robin Moore's book and this film. Egan's exploits provided the source material for another film, *Badge 373* 1973. During his 16 years on NYPD, Egan – whose real-life badge number was 373, who wore a porkpie hat and who carried his gun in an ankle holster – was credited with 8,741 arrests. He smoked unfiltered Camels.

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from *World Film Directors*, V.II, ed. John Wakeman, NY 1988

[Friedkin's tv] output included several well-received documentary specials, of which the most notable was *The People Versus Paul Crump*, winner of the Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco Film Festival. A 16mm film about a man who had spent eleven years on Death Row in Cook County prison, it offered such convincing evidence of Crump's rehabilitation that his death sentence was eventually commuted. WBKB-TV, the Chicago station for which Friedkin had made the film, never used it, but was sufficiently impressed to set up a documentary unit with Friedkin in charge. Before long *The People Versus Paul Crump* came to the attention of the ABC-TV producer David Wolper, who hired Friedkin to make three more documentaries: *The Thin Blue Line*, about law enforcement; *Mayhem on a Sunday Afternoon*, a report on professional football; and *The Bold Men*, dealing with people who risk their lives for money, adventure or science.

He has said that as a filmmaker he is happiest researching a new idea or editing a fresh batch of footage; actual shooting seems to him a laborious, plodding process, and the final editing is often a source of anxiety and despair. "No matter what you hear," Friedkin said once, "the projectionist has final cut always." He has been known to replace a screen or projector lenses at theaters where his pictures are showing, and is a perfectionist about sound and light levels at which they are projected.... Pauline Kael quotes him as saying that "I'm not a thinker. . . . If it's a film *by* somebody instead of *for* somebody, I smell art."

**Join us next week, Tuesday April 10, for Sean Connery and Michael Cane in  
John Huston's THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING 1975**

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