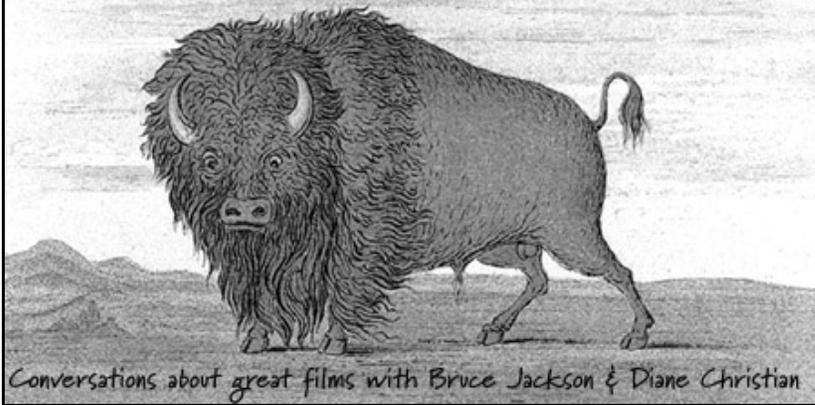


The Buffalo Film Seminars



RANCIS FORD COPPOLA (Detroit, Michigan, 7 April 1939) has directed 30 films, among them *Megalopolis* 2005, *John Grisham's The Rainmaker* 1997, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* 1992, *The Godfather: Part III* 1990, *Tucker: The Man and His Dream* 1988, *Gardens of Stone* 1987, *Peggy Sue Got Married* 1986, *The Cotton Club* 1984, *Rumble Fish* 1983, *The Outsiders* 1983, *One from the Heart* 1982, *Apocalypse Now* 1979, *The Conversation* 1974, *The Godfather* 1972, *The Rain People* 1969, and *Dementia 13* 1963. He received Best Director Oscar nominations for *Godfather Part III*, *Godfather Part II* (won), *Apocalypse Now*, *The Godfather*; Best Picture nominations for *Godfather Part III*, *Godfather Part II* (won), *Apocalypse Now*, *The Conversation*, *American Graffiti*; Best Screenplay nominations for *Apocalypse Now*, *Godfather Part II* (won), *The Conversation*, *The Godfather* (won), and *Patton* (won).

November 30, 2004 (IX:14)



GORDON WILLIS (28 May 1931, Queens, NY) has shot 31 films. His colleagues call him the “Prince of Darkness” for his astonishing ability to get gorgeous scenes out of underexposed negatives. He did all three Godfather films, as well as many of Woody Allen’s films. Some of his films are *The Devil's Own* 1997, *Malice* 1993, *Presumed Innocent* 1990, *Bright Lights, Big City* 1988, *The Purple Rose of Cairo* 1985, *Broadway Danny Rose* 1984, *Zelig* 1983, *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy* 1982, *Pennies from Heaven* 1981, *Stardust Memories* 1980, *Manhattan* 1979, *Annie Hall* 1977, *The Drowning Pool* 1975, *The Parallax View* 1974, *Bad Company* 1972, *Klute* 1971, *Little Murders* 1971, *End of the Road* 1970 and others. He received Oscar nominations only for *The Godfather: Part III* and *Zelig* 1983.

NINO ROTA (3 December 1911, Milan, Lombardy, Italy—10 April 1979, Rome, Italy, coronary thrombosis) composed scores for 171 films. In addition to all three Godfather films, and nearly all of Federico Fellini’s films, some of the others were, *Death on the Nile* 1978, *The Leopard* 1963, *Rocco and His Brothers* 1961, *Purple Noon* 1961, and *I Vitelloni* 1953. He won a Best Music Oscar for *Godfather II* and was nominated for *Godfather I*.

AL PACINO (25 April 1940, Bronx, NY) has acted in 40 films, most recently as Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* 2004. Some of his other films are *Insomnia* 2002, *The Devil's Advocate* 1997, *Donnie Brasco* 1997, *Heat* 1995, *Carlito's Way* 1993, *Scent of a Woman* 1992, *Glengarry Glen Ross* 1992, *Scarface* 1983, *Dog Day Afternoon* 1975, *Serpico* 1973, *The Godfather* 1972, and *The Panic in Needle Park* 1971. He was nominated for 8 best actor Oscars and won just one, for *Scent of a Woman*. He won an Outstanding Lead Actor in a Miniseries of a Movie Emmy for his portrayal of Roy Cohn in the HBO miniseries “Angels in America” 2003.

ROBERT DUVAL (5 January 1931, San Diego, California) has acted in 86 films and in many television series such as Alfred Hitchcock Presents, *The Outer Limits*, and *Naked City*. Some of his films are *Gods and Generals* 2003, *A Civil Action* 1998, *The Apostle* 1997 (which he directed), *Sling Blade* 1996, *The Scarlet Letter* 1995, *The Plague* 1992, *The Handmaid's Tale* 1990, “Lonesome Dove” 1989 (tv miniseries), *The Natural* 1984, *Tender Mercies* 1983, *True Confessions* 1981, *The Great Santini* 1979, *Apocalypse Now* 1979, *Network* 1976, *The Killer Elite* 1975, *The Conversation* 1974, *The Great Northfield, Minnesota Raid* 1972, *The Godfather* 1972, *THX 1138* 1971, *MASH* 1970, *The Rain People* 1969, *True Grit* 1969, *Bullitt* 1968, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 1962. He received three Best Supporting Actor nominations: *A Civil Action*, *Apocalypse Now* and *The Godfather*, and three Best Actor Oscar nominations *The Apostle*, *Tender Mercies* (won), and *The Great Santini*.

DIANE KEATON (5 January 1946) has acted in 45 films and directed 11. She appears in all three Godfather films, and many Woody Allen Films. Some of her films are *Marvin's Room* 1996, *Manhattan Murder Mystery* 1993, *Radio Days* 1987, *Crimes of the Heart* 1986, *The Little Drummer Girl* 1984, *Reds* 1981, *Manhattan* 1979, *Interiors* 1978, *Annie Hall* 1977, *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* 1977, *Love and Death* 1975, *Sleeper* 1973, *Play It Again, Sam* 1972, and *Lovers and Other Strangers* 1970. She won a Best Actress Oscar for *Annie Hall* and was nominated for *Something's Gotta Give* 2003, *Marvin's Room* and *Reds*.

ROBERT DE NIRO (17 August 1943, New York City) has acted in nearly 70 films, the most recent of which is *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* 2004. Some of the others are *Analyze That* 2002, *Analyze This* 1999, *Jackie Brown* 1997, *Wag the Dog* 1997, *Marvin's Room* 1996, *Heat* 1995, *Casino* 1995, *Frankenstein* 1994, *A Bronx Tale* 1993, *Cape Fear* 1991, *Goodfellas* 1990, *The Untouchables* 1987, *Angel Heart* 1987, *The Mission* 1986, *Brazil* 1985, *Once Upon a Time in America* 1984, *The King of Comedy* 1983, *True Confessions* 1981, *Raging Bull* 1980,

The Deer Hunter 1978, *1900* 1976, *Taxi Driver* 1976, *Mean Streets* 1973, *Bang the Drum Slowly* 1973. He was nominated for Best Actor Oscars for *Cape Fear*, *Awakenings* 1990, *Raging Bull* (won), *The Deer Hunter*, *Taxi Driver*, and for Best Supporting Actor for *Godfather II* (won).

JOHN CAZALE (12 August 1935, Boston, Massachusetts—12 March 1978, NYC, bone cancer) appeared in only six films: the three *Godfather* films, and *The Deer Hunter* 1978, *Dog Day Afternoon* 1975 and *The Conversation* 1974.

Pauline Kael in 5001 Nights at the Movies. Holt Rinehart Winston NY 1985

The daring of *Part II* is that it enlarges the scope and deepens the meaning of the first film. Visually, *Part II* is far more complexly beautiful than the first, just as it's thematically richer, more shadowed, fuller. The completed work, contrasting the early manhood of Vito (Robert De Niro) with the life of Michael, his inheritor (Al Pacino), is an epic vision of the corruption of America.

Neil Smith, BBC Films

You can count on the fingers of one hand sequels that have lived up to the original, and two of them were directed by James Cameron ("Aliens" and "Terminator 2: Judgement Day"). But only one movie can legitimately be said to be better than the film that inspired it, and that is "The Godfather, Part II" - the only sequel to win an Oscar for best picture. Breathtaking in its scope, scale, and tragic grandeur, this masterful follow-up takes the central theme of the first film (the family that slays together, stays together) and makes it a telling metaphor for America's immigrant experience....

Kevin Hagopian, New York State Writers Institute

GODFATHER II was an original script. With the success of THE GODFATHER in 1972, Paramount spoke of a sequel, but Mario Puzo's original novel offered little in the way of additional action that might be mined for the project. Creatively, Coppola used the opportunity to create both a sequel and a prequel at the same time. He would spin the tale of Vito Corleone back into time, deep into the dirt and sun and blood of Sicily, following his progress. At the same moment, he imagined what would happen if Michael Corleone, Vito's son, continued forward on the same trajectory on which the first film had started him. The result would be a grand montage of the young Vito's transformation into a padrone, a don, a ruthless, oracular figure out of the Middle Ages, together with the descent of Michael into a passionate stillness of the soul. As Vito "rises," Michael falls. We watch fascinated, as Vito becomes a Manhattan Machiavelli, while Michael becomes a Hamlet of Lake Tahoe, brooding on its wintry shore over slights real and imagined, planning restitution to a code of honor so Byzantine that even his own brother can fall afoul of it. Both are clinical in their estimations of a man's worth to them, both are brilliant manipulators of a pattern of debts, favors, and reprisals, and both are fanatically devoted to their families. It is Michael's fate to forget the difference between his

THE GODFATHER, PART II (1974) 187 min

Al Pacino...Michael Corleone
 Robert Duvall...Tom Hagen
 Diane Keaton...Kay Adams
 Robert De Niro...Vito Corleone
 John Cazale...Fredo Corleone
 Lee Strasberg...Hyman Roth
 Talia Shire...Connie
 David Baker...FBI Agent
 Giuseppe Sillato...Don Francesco
 James Gounaris...Anthony Corleone
 Tere Livrano...Theresa Hagen
 Frank Sivero...Genco
 Ezio Flagello...Impresario
 Carmine Foresta...Policeman
 Nick Discenza...Bartender
 Maria Carta...Vito's Mother
 Richard Watson...Custom Official
 G.D. Spradlin...Senator Pat Geary
 Phil Feldman...Senator #1
 Roger Corman...Senator #2
 Sofia Coppola...Child
 Roman Coppola...Young Sonny Corleone
 James Caan...Sonny
 William Bowers...Senate Committee Chairman
 Abe Vigoda...Tessio
 Harry Dean Stanton...FBI Man
 Joe Spinell...Willie Cicci
 Gianni Russo...Carlo
 Gastone Moschin...Fanucci
 Bruce "Bruno" Kirby, Jr....Young Clemeza
 Morgana King...Mama Corleone
 Michael Vincente Gazzo...Frankie Pentangeli
 Francesca de Sapio...Young Mama Corleone

Vincent Coppola...Street Vendor
 Danny Aiello...Tony Rosato
 Francis Ford Coppola...Screenwriter, Producer, Director
 Mario Puzo...Book Author, Screenwriter
 Walter Murch...Sound/Sound Designer
 Gordon Willis...Cinematographer
 Dean Tavoularis...Production Designer
 Nino Rota...Composer (Music Score)
 Carmine Coppola...Musical Direction/Supervision, Composer (Music Score), Conductor
 Peter Zinner...Editor
 Gray Fredrickson...Producer

Oscar nominations (* indicates win):

Best Actor...Al Pacino
 *Best Adapted Screenplay...Mario Puzo
 *Best Adapted Screenplay...Francis Ford Coppola
 *Best Art Direction...George R. Nelson
 *Best Art Direction...Angelo P. Graham
 *Best Art Direction...Dean Tavoularis
 Best Costume Design...Theadora Van Runkle
 *Best Director...Francis Ford Coppola
 *Best Picture
 *Best Original Dramatic Score...Carmine Coppola
 *Best Original Dramatic Score...Nino Rota
 *Best Supporting Actor..Robert De Niro
 Best Supporting Actor...Michael Vincente Gazzo
 Best Supporting Actor...Lee Strasberg
 Best Supporting Actress...Talia Shire

blood family, the Corleones of Sicily, Mott Street, Brooklyn, and Nevada, and the extended criminal empire that bears the same name. It is a mark of Coppola's genius that we somehow feel no satisfaction at what Michael's cruelty costs him.

The film had the enthusiastic cooperation of Al Pacino, who plays Michael in postwar prosperity emotional solitude. But the other half of the story, particularly once Paramount rejected Marlon Brando's intentionally outrageous financial demands for participation in the film, rested on an unknown quantity, the story of the young Vito Corleone. Coppola believed, he said, that Robert De Niro's messianic intensity could fill in the years missing from Mario Puzo's potboiler novel on which the first GODFATHER had been based. He had met De Niro during the casting of the first GODFATHER, when he had decided against De Niro as Sonny Corleone, a part that eventually went to James Caan. Coppola was intrigued with the young man already known as one of the screen's most compelling performers: "Not that he could play Marlon Brando as a young man, but that he could play *Vito Corleone* as a young man."

from World Film Directors V. II. Ed. John Wakeman. H.H.

Wilson Co. NY 1988

American director, scenarist and producer, born in Detroit, Michigan, second of the three children of Italian-American parents. . . .He remembers his childhood as “very warm, very tempestuous, full of controversy and a lot of passion and shouting. My father, who is an enormously talented man, was the focus of all our lives. . . . Our lives centered on what we all felt was the tragedy of his career.” (That tragedy has now been resolved by Francis Coppola himself, who used his father’s music in *The Godfather Part II*, *Apocalypse Now*, and the restored *Napoleon*.)

Talent in the family was not confined to the father. Coppola’s mother, the former Italia Penino, at one time acted in films. His older brother August is a writer and a professor of literature. His younger sister Talia Shire, who appears in both *Godfather* films, has become well known for her performances in *Rocky* and *Old Boyfriends*, and his nephew, Nicholas Cage, has starred in several recent films....

Coppola made his first movies at the age of ten with his father’s 8mm camera and tape recorder. About the time he graduated from Great Neck High School, Long Island, he discovered the films of Eisenstein. Coppola became so ardent a disciple that, though he was “really dying to make a film,” he chose to seek a rounded theatrical education first “because Eisenstein had started like that.” In 1956 he entered Hofstra College (now University) on a drama scholarship and almost immediately made a stir with an anti-administration story in a student magazine.

In 1960 Coppola went on to the UCLA film school. He was a graduate student but younger than most of the others, and was lonely and disappointed. No one at UCLA seemed to share his interest in the dramatic bases of the cinema except the veteran director Dorothy Arzner, one of his teachers. Desperate to “fool around with a camera and cut a film,” he shocked the other students by hiring himself out as a director of porno films, then appalled them by going to work for Roger Corman.

Corman was in those days despised as a cheapskate manufacturer of exploitation movies, though even then it was clear he was prepared to take chances on talented young filmmakers. Coppola’s first job for him was to dub and reedit a rather sentimental Russian science-fiction film, turning it into a sex-and-violence monster movie called *Battle Beyond the Sun* (1962). Corman paid him \$200 for six months’ work but gave him his first screen credit (as “Thomas Colchart”).

He got his first directorial assignment by exploiting Corman’s notorious stinginess. Filming in Ireland in 1962, he pointed out that it was a pity to bring a crew so far for a single movie, and sold Corman on an idea of his own on the strength of a single ghoulish scene. Shooting began soon afterwards on a script that Coppola had written in three days, and he invited some of his American friends over to Ireland to join in. One of them was his set director Eleanor Neil, whom he married the same year. *Dementia 13* was made for forty thousand dollars. It is a grisly confection of no great distinction about inheritances and ax murders, but it seem to Coppola now “the only film I ever enjoyed working on.”

Before 1962 was over Coppola, still enrolled at UCLA, won the Samuel Goldwyn award for a scenario and on that account was hired as a scriptwriter by Seven Arts (later Warner Brothers-Seven Arts). He made adaptations —later much rewritten by others—of Carson McCullers’ *Reflections in a Golden Eye* and Tennessee Williams’ *This Property is Condemned*, and in collaboration with Gore Vidal wrote *Is Paris Burning?* Frustrated by his inability to get a film made in his own way, he personally bought the rights to David

Benedictus’ novel *You’re a Big Boy Now*, fusing it in his adaptation with a story idea of his own. He made the picture “on hope and credit,” with some backing from Seven Arts plus the fifty thousand dollars he had earned as co-author of *Patton* (a script that brought him as Oscar when it was eventually released in 1970.)

Structurally weak as it is, *You’re a Big Boy Now* is perhaps the most likable of Coppola’s films—funny, fast-paced, and often perceptive and original in its characterization. It was much discussed and warmly praised by many critics as the debut of a new director of great talent and promise—the first such produced by a university film school—but it was overwhelmed at the box office by a slicker movie on a similar theme, Mike Nichols’ *The Graduate*.

Offering *You’re a Big Boy Now* as his thesis, Coppola left UCLA with a master’s degree in 1967. It was at about this time that he made his much-quoted statement about patterning his life on Hitler’s, later explaining that “the way to come to power is not always to merely challenge the Establishment, but first make a place in it and then challenge, and double-cross, the Establishment.” Guided by this philosophy, Coppola agreed to direct a screen version for Warner Brothers-Seven Arts of the 1940s Broadway musical *Finian’s Rainbow*, a dated and improbably whimsy about leprechauns and racial integration. He was out of his depth and “faking it” much of the time but—until the picture bombed on release—Warners were delighted and blew the film up from 35mm to 70mm (thus chopping off its principal asset, Fred Astaire’s feet).

Finian’s Rainbow introduced Coppola to George Lucas, a young film school graduate who served as production assistant on Coppola’s next film and brought in his friend Walter Murch to handle sound. *The Rain People*, written and directed by Coppola, was financed by him too until his money ran out (when Warner Brothers-Seven Arts chipped in). It stars Shirley Knight as a Long Island housewife who feels that she is losing her identity in marriage. Finding herself pregnant and fearing total engulfment, she leaves her husband and drives off across America in search of herself. James Caan plays the brain-damaged football player who becomes her surrogate child, and Robert Duvall the cop who seems to offer her sexual freedom. Traveling west with a small crew in a remodeled bus, Coppola wrote the script as he went. “We just drove,” he says, and when they found a likely setting it was written into the picture. The result was sloppy in construction but rich in unsterotypical character studies; an American travelogue and a feminist film ahead of its time (but one, as its director admits, with “a *deus ex machina* and a very emotional plea to have a family”).

In 1969 Coppola established American Zoetrope in a San Francisco warehouse. Financed by Warners, it is a small but splendidly equipped studio for editing, mixing, and sound recording, and Coppola has continued to use it for these purposes. But in the beginning it was conceived as something very much more—a base from which to launch a revolution in the American film industry. According to Lucas, Zoetrope’s vice president, they hoped to make seven or eight films a year, some of them “safe and reasonable” to pay for others that would be “really off-the-wall productions. It was a way to give first-time directors a break and do what studios would not ordinarily do.”

American Zoetrope in its original manifestation collapsed after a year or so. But not before Coppola had begun what has been seen as a “Hollywood Renaissance.” Thousands of young filmmakers wrote to Zoetrope or visited or sent their films. Unfortunately, many exploited the place, stealing or breaking the equipment. The high hopes faded as the money ran out, and Coppola’s own reputation suffered when both *Finian’s Rainbow* and *The Rain People* failed on

release. Zoetrope's first film—Lucas' *THX-1138*—was also its last. Warners, who were to distribute the Zoetrope products, disliked the picture and asked for their money back. At thirty, Coppola was three hundred thousand dollars in debt and apparently finished as a filmmaker.

At that low point, Coppola was invited by Paramount to direct a major film based on Mario Puzo's bestselling Mafia novel *The Godfather*. It was not an easy picture. The crew at first had little faith in Coppola, who also had to fight hard to persuade Paramount to accept the stars he wanted and to make the film "in period." There was bitter opposition from the Italian-American Civil Rights League (whose president, an alleged mobster, was shot at a Columbus Day rally during the filming). And Coppola had his usual difficulty in deciding how to end the film....

The Godfather is immensely dramatic and exciting—a "dynastic romance" told with "a marvelously operatic use of pomp and violence." It opens the door on the mores and rituals of an exotic subculture, and it is one of the great gangster films. Robert K. Johnson suggests that "no other film has so imaginatively presented murder in such a variety of visually vivid ways," and Jay Cocks thought it "a mass entertainment that is also great movie art." Serious claims have been made for it as an indictment of American capitalism, and Coppola encouraged this view by saying that the Mafia "is no different from any other big, greedy, profit-making corporation in America."...

The Godfather won an Academy Award as the best picture of 1972, and Coppola received an additional Oscar as coauthor (with Puzo) of the best script based on material from another medium. Financially the film was staggeringly successful—at that time the most profitable movie in history, making more than a million dollars a day in profit for months after it was released. It recouped all of Coppola's losses and made him rich. For a time after it was finished he involved himself in less strenuous projects, including two stage productions in San Francisco....It was at this time that Coppola joined with William Friedkin and Peter Bogdanovich to form the Directors Company, a Paramount-backed consortium that in the end turned out only two movies—Bogdanovich's *Paper Moon* and Coppola's *The Conversation*.

Coppola's fascination with technology is at the center of *The Conversation*, which he wrote, directed, and coproduced.

The Godfather Part II carries the story both backward and forward in time. It begins in 1901 in Sicily, where a young boy is orphaned by vendetta. He is Vito Andolini (soon to be Corleone) and he emigrates to America; we see him (now played by Robert De Niro) finding his feet in New York, battling the Black Hand, and emerging as a power in the neighborhood. The film ends with his "respectable" son Michael in a position of unassailable power but without a wife, brothers, friends, or any vestige of common humanity. Coppola was anxious to correct the impression that he admired the Corleones and to some extent he succeeds—if Vito as a young man has something of the Robin Hood in him, his son at the end is wholly-corrupted and cold-hearted. Indeed, the darkness that surrounds Michael at the end of the film is a measure of his achievement: he is lord of the underworld, and king of the dead and the damned. A more analytic film than its predecessor, greatly admired for the loving recreation of old New York in the early scenes, *The Godfather Part II* won Oscars for best picture, best director, best script (Coppola and Puzo), best supporting actor (De Niro), and best original score (Nino Rota and Carmine Coppola).

Coppola's position in the movie industry now seemed assured....By late 1975 he was at work on another movie, *Apocalypse*

Now—a version of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* updated to the Vietnam War. John Milius had written the original script under Coppola's sponsorship years before, when George Lucas was to have directed it. Now Coppola took the project over. It tells the story of Captain Willard (Martin Sheen), an Army officer with CIA connections, who is sent upriver from Saigon to "terminate" a certain Colonel Kurtz (Marlon Brando), a brilliant officer who has gone off the rails and established a private kingdom in Cambodia.

Shooting began in the Philippines in March 1976 and continued on and off for sixteen months, hindered by every conceivable kind of problem. Coppola replaced his leading actor, with great difficulty, after filming had begun. Typhoon Olga destroyed the sets. Martin Sheen had a heart attack. Before the film was finished, Coppola had mortgaged everything he owned to cover personally some sixteen million dollars of the thirty million it cost. Nor was the price only financial. Eleanor Coppola, who went to the Philippines to make a documentary about the filming, has written a book about the ordeal and the strains it placed on the marriage. In March 1977 she wrote of Coppola in her diary: "I guess he has had a sort of nervous breakdown. . . . The film he is making is a metaphor for a journey into self. He has made that journey and is still making it."

Editing continued throughout 1978, with Coppola unable to decide how to end the film: "Working on the ending is like trying to crawl up glass by your fingernails."

At the box office the film was a major success, and Coppola rose once more from the ashes, his much-discussed plans for a quieter life apparently forgotten. He was soon gearing up a variety of projects for friends and protégés, starting with a script about the flamboyant car-maker Preston Tucker, and making notes for "a more personal, more theatrical film"—a love story set in Japan and America and based on Goethe's *Elective Affinities*. Late in 1979 he was negotiating for the Hollywood General production lot in Los Angeles and Zoetrope, reestablishing this time as "a little factory, like a Republic or an RKO, making one movie a month in the old style and at an intelligent price. But I believe we'll be the first all-electric movie studio in the world. . . . It just takes the wisdom and the guts to invest in the future."

The same year Zoetrope brought out *The Black Stallion* directed by Carroll Ballard, with Coppola executive producing, but despite that film's broad critical success, the studio was by no means financially equipped for Coppola's next directorial effort, *One From the Heart* (1982). When foreign investors suddenly withdrew support in the midst of production, Coppola mortgaged everything he owned—including Zoetrope and his own homes—to complete the ambitious undertaking. . . . Though the sets [designed by Dean Tavoularis], as well as the music by Tom Waits, received praise, the film as a whole was a critical and box-office flop...

The artistically adventurous features that Zoetrope produced or co-produced in the early '80s (*Hammett*, *The Escape Artist* and *Koyaanisqatsi* among them, with Kurosawa's *Kagemusha* perhaps Coppola's pet project) did little to help the studio's flagging financial resources, and in 1982 Coppola was forced to sell Zoetrope. He did not, however, declare bankruptcy but instead undertook to repay the debts he had incurred with *One From the Heart*. Ripe for projects with more popular appeal, Coppola took on the task of filming *The Outsiders*, a novel for teenagers by S.E. Hinton. Coppola had been "selected" by a group of high school students as the ideal director for a film version about rich and poor adolescents in Oklahoma, and upon reading the book, Coppola agreed with them. He immediately began filming with Matt Dillon in the lead, and tried to cultivate a genuine rift between the young actors playing underprivileged

“greasers” and those playing wealthy “socs” to effect realistic confrontations on the screen. Coppola was so pleased with his progress that he decided in the middle of making *The Outsiders* to use the same crew and some of the same actors to make a second Hinton adaptation from her novel *Rumble Fish*. This dreamy black-and-white film depicts the darker side of the gang dynamics seen in *The Outsiders*, and pursues the theme of competition between brothers that Coppola has returned to repeatedly. Dillon again starred, with Dennis Hopper and Mickey Rourke in supporting roles; the film was dedicated to Coppola’s older brother August.

At first dismissed as exploitation pictures, these two films have intrigued later critics, who have discerned here an inventive and unabashed romanticism at play in the confines of genre. Coppola worked closely with Hinton during the filming and achieved an unusual degree of creative control, especially over *Rumble Fish*, which is one of his own favorites. But as Richard Jameson remarked, a picture designed as “an art film for teenagers” ran the risk of bewildering its intended audience, who lack “a lexicon for its arty codes.”

Faced with such discouraging responses and still owing an enormous sum of money, Coppola felt “the key is to keep working.” ...Coppola received the Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters from France in 1984.

He could not have found backing for his independent projects at this time, and so responded positively to Robert Evans’ plea for help with a “sick child”: *The Cotton Club*.

Evans had originally intended to direct the film about the famous Harlem nightclub himself, but when it became mired in financial and legal problems he brought in Coppola to placate the film’s investors. Coppola wrote almost forty versions of the script, working at first with Mario Puzo and then with novelist William Kennedy, finally coming up with a plot that blended classic Hollywood gangster and musical genres....

Coppola directed portions of the film from an elaborately equipped electronics van parked outside each location. ...Because the \$47-million film was so technically complex and was repeatedly interrupted by litigation (following one series of lawsuits Evans lost ownership of the film; in a contract dispute, Coppola temporarily withdrew from the project) Coppola never achieved the creative control he sought, probably fulfilling his own dictum that “more money means less freedom.” Pauline Kael wrote that in *Cotton Club* “Coppola, seemingly tormented by his inability to fulfill his own ideas and talents, took refuge in unsubtle stylistics.”

The emphasis on huge, state-of-the-art production methods that contributed to the expense and difficulty of making *The Cotton*

Club nonetheless engaged Coppola more and more. In 1985 he made his first work for television, a dramatization of “Rip Van Winkle” for cable television. Coppola crafted many of the fantastic scenes in the fairy tale with computer imaging systems that allow for the exact imposition of many separately filmed images. He found the video medium very much to his liking, and hired Eiko Ishioku, who had done surrealistic sets for Paul Schrader’s *Mishima*, a 1985 film about Japanese author Yukio Mishima that Coppola helped produce, to design the sets for “Rip Van Winkle.” Though the director’s reliance on technology was faulted in *The Outsiders* and *One From the Heart* for distancing him from his work, Coppola insists that “film is already like the horseless carriage. Film is beautiful, but it is dead, it is not any longer relevant. The new medium, video, is so incredibly flexible and immediate and economical and *can* be as beautiful that it’s bound to take over.” In 1985 Coppola was able to indulge all his high-tech excitement in making *Captain Eo*, a 12-minute space fantasy starring (and with songs by) Michael Jackson, produced by George Lucas and with camerawork by Vittorio Storraro. The film will be shown only at Disneyland and Disney World, on huge Imax screens that emanate fog and laser beams.

Coppola swings between epic, high-tech behemoths and intimate studies and his uneven success rate are characteristic of many directors of his generation, according to David Sterritt, who maintains that Cimino, Scorsese, Spielberg and Coppola face “the difficulty of joining personal expression with big money and flashy show-biz traditions.” But despite his track record, the film industry has treated Coppola with unusual lenience, perhaps because, as producer Irwin Jablans has said, “he’s the last, or maybe just the latest, of the great old larger-than-life American directors. His failures are more interesting than many other directors’ hits.”

“Castro-bearded and restless,” immensely knowledgeable about every aspect of filmmaking, Coppola has been described as “still something of the enthusiastic schoolboy egghead.” ...[His] second son was killed in a boating accident in 1986. “You know what it’s like to be a director?” he said once. “It’s like running in front of a locomotive. If you stop, if you trip, if you make a mistake, you get killed.” Coppola’s own career bears this out, but he has always refused to stay dead, and he has breathed life into those around him. “He subsidized us all,” John Milius says. “George Lucas and me. Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz, who wrote *American Graffiti*, Hal Barwood, Matt Robbins. . .He is responsible for a whole generation; indirectly he is responsible for Scorsese and De Palma. You cannot overemphasize the importance he had. If this generation is to change American cinema, he is to be given the credit, or the discredit.”

**Join us next Tuesday, December 7, for the final presentation in Buffalo Film Seminars IX:
Orson Welles’s CITIZEN KANE (1941)**

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