

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

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MIDNIGHT COWBOY (1969)

Everybody's talkin' at me I don't hear a word they're sayin' Only the echoes of my mind. People stop and starin' I can't see their faces Only the shadows of their eyes I'm goin' where the sun keeps shinin' Through the pourin' rain. Goin' where the weather suits my clothes Bankin' off of the northeast winds Sailin' on summer breeze And skippin' over the ocean like a stone. ("Everybody's Talkin'," Fred Neil, 1968)

JOHN SCHLESINGER (16 February 1926, London) made his first film at age 11, a documentary about one of his indomitable Jewish grandmothers with his new 9.5mm camera. He did short reportage films for BBC "*Tonight*" and documentaries for BBC arts program *Monitor* and worked several years as an actor. He said he was drawn to *Midnight Cowboy* by its theme of loneliness. "The security and happiness that people achieve in life always fall short of their expectations and they must simply make the most of it." "I tried to breathe into the film the mixture of desperation and humor which I found all along 42nd Street while filming in NYC." His other films are *The Next Best Thing* 2000, *Eye for an Eye* 1996, *The Innocent* 1993, *A Question of Attribution* 1992, *Pacific Heights* 1990, *Madame Sousatzka* 1988, *The Falcon and the Snowman* 1984, *Honky Tonk Freeway* 1981, *Yanks* 1979, *Marathon Man* 1976, *The Day of the Locust* 1975, *Sunday Bloody Sunday* 1971, *Far from the Madding Crowd* 1967, *Darling* 1965, *Billy Liar* 1963, *A Kind of Loving* 1962, and *Terminus* 1961.

DUSTIN HOFFMAN (8 August 1937, Los Angeles, California) won best actor Oscars for *Kramer v. Kramer* 1979 and *Rain Man* 1988, and was nominated best actor for *Wag the Dog* 1997, *Tootsie* 1982, *Lenny* 1974, *Midnight Cowboy* and *The Graduate* 1967. Some of his other films are *American Buffalo* 1996, *Billy Bathgate* 1991, *Dick Tracy* 1990, *Straight Time* 1978, *Marathon Man* 1976, *All the President's Men* 1976, *Papillon* 1973, *Straw Dogs* 1971, and *Little Big Man* 1970. The American Film Institute gave him its Life Achievement Award in 1999. He was paid \$17,000 for his role in *The Graduate* and \$250,000 for *Midnight Cowboy*. Hoffman had a minor production job in Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* in 1963. Miller said that when Hoffman was older he'd be a perfect Willy Loman, the protagonist of Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, that Hoffman was the size and build of the person he'd had in mind when he was writing the play. An older Hoffman did play Loman in the play's 1984 revival. In 1989 he played Shylock in a London production (later moved to New York) of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

JON VOIGHT (29 December 1938, Yonkers, New York) became a star because of his Oscar-nominated performance as Joe Buck in *Midnight Cowboy*, but he was a late choice. The part had previously been offered to Michael Sarrazin and Elvis Presley, among others. He won a best actor Academy Award for *Coming Home* 1978, and was nominated for *Runaway Train* 1985. Some of his other films are *Pearl Harbor* 2001, *The Rainmaker* 1997, *Mission: Impossible* 1996, *The Odessa File* 1974 and *Catch-22* 1970.

Rico Rizzo: You know, in my own place, my name ain't Ratso. I mean, it just so happens that in my own place my name is Enrico Salvatore Rizzo.

Joe Buck: Well, I can't say all that.

Rico Rizzo: Rico, then.

Party Guest: Why are you stealing food?

Rico Rizzo: I was just, uh, noticing that you're out of salami. I think you oughtta have somebody go over to the delicatessen, you know, bring some more back.

Florin Productions /United Artists
1969, 113 minutes

Best picture, director, screenplay Oscars; best actor nominations for Hoffman & Voight, supporting actress for Myles & editing for Robertson..

Director John Schlesinger
Script Waldo Salt
based on James Leo Herlihy's novel
Producer Jerome Hellman
Original music John Barry
Cinematography Adam Holender
Editor Hugh A. Robertson
Production Design John Robert Lloyd
Set Decoration Philip Smith
Harmonica Jean "Toots" Thielmann

Dustin Hoffman Rico "Ratso" Rizzo

Jon Voight Joe Buck

Sylvia Miles Cass

John McGiver Mr. O'Daniel

Brenda Vaccaro Shirley Gardner

Barnard Hughes Towny

Jennifer Salt Crazy Annie

Bob Balaban Homosexual Student in Theatre

Waldo Salt Joe Pine on TV Show

Ultra Violet, Paul Jabara, International

Velvet, Cecelia Lipson, Taylor Mead, Paul

Morrissey at the party

Party Guest: Well, you know, it's free. You don't have to steal it.

Rico Rizzo: Well, if it's free, then I ain't steal in'.

Joe Buck: I like the way I look. Makes me feel good, it does. And women like me, goddammit. Hell, the only one thing I ever been good for is lovin'. Women go crazy for me, that's a really true fact! Rats, hell! Crazy Annie they had to send her away!

Rico Rizzo: Then, how come you ain't scored once the whole time you been in New York?

Rats Rizzo: Frankly, you're beginning to smell and for a stud in New York, that's a handicap.

From James Leo Herlihy, *Midnight Cowboy*, 1965:

In his new boots, Joe Buck was six-foot-one and life was different. As he walked out of that store in Houston something snapped in the whole bottom half of him: A kind of power he never even knew was there had been released in his pelvis and he was able to feel the world through it. Brand-new muscles came into play in his buttocks and in his legs, and he was aware of a totally new attitude toward the sidewalk. The world was down there, and he was way up here, on top of it, and the space between him and it was no commanded by a beautiful strange animal, himself, Joe Buck. He was strong. He was exultant. He was ready.

"I'm ready," he said to himself, and he wondered what he meant by that.

Now at this time in which Joe Buck was coming out of the West on that Greyhound bus to seek his fortune in the East, he was already twenty-seven years old. But he had behind him as little experience of life as a boy of eighteen, and in some ways even less.

He had been raised by various blondes. The first three, who brought him up to the age of seven, were young and pretty.

There was a great deal of coming and going in the household of the three blondes and he was never certain which of them was which. At various intervals, each of them seemed to be his mother, known as Mama this or Mama that, but he later learned that two of them were merely friends in whose household his real mother shared. But the blondes were all nice to him, allowed him to do as he pleased, bought gifts and fondled him a great deal.

Following Rizzo to the back of the barroom, Joe noticed two things about him. First, that he was a cripple. His left leg was small and misshapen, probably the result of some childhood disease. His entire body dipped to the side with each step so that his walk had a kind of rolling motion to it like the progress of a lopsided wheel. The second thing Joe noticed was that the big ears sticking out of Rizzo's head did not seem at all to be the property of a man. Suddenly the runt was a twelve-year-old, and Joe had to restrain an impulse to reach out and teak and ear or tug on a handful of that filthy hair.

For good *Midnight Cowboy* links visit www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Bayou/3385/MidnightCowboy.html or www.svn.com.br/~lud/cowboy.htm**Join us next Wednesday 1 November for Bob Fosse's autonecromusical, *ALL THAT JAZZ***...for cast and crew info on almost any film: imdb.com/search.html or allmovie.com...for information on major American films, including detailed plot summaries: www.filmsite.org.... email Bruce Jackson: bjackson@buffalo.edu...email Diane Christian: engdc@acsu.buffalo.edu...for the series schedule, links and updates: www.buffalofilmseminars.com... for the weekly email informational notes, send an email to either of us.

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