

ANGIE DICKINSON (30 September 1931, Kulm, North Dakota) acted in 64 films and in 67 TV programs and series. She is perhaps best known for her popular tv series "Police Woman" (1974-1978).Her most recent film was Elvis Has Left the Building (2004). Some of the others were Even Cowgirls Get the Blues (1993), Big Bad Mama II (1987), Dressed to Kill (1980), Big Bad Mama (1974), Pretty Maids All in a Row (1971), The Killers (1964), The Sins of Rachel Cade (1961), and The Return of Jack Slade (1955)

CARROLL O’CONNOR (2 August 1924, Manhattan, New York—21 June 2001, Culver City, California, heart attack brought on by complications from diabetes) acted in 20 films and 67 television programs and series. He is best known for his portrayal of the choleric bigot Archie Bunker in "All in the Family" and "Archie Bunker's Place" (1971-1983).

KEENAN WYNN (27 July 1916, NYC—14 October 1986, Los Angeles, California, cancer) acted in 137 films and 124 TV programs and series. Perhaps his most memorable role was as Col. "Bat" Guano in Stanley Kubrick's Dr. Strangelove: or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964). Some of his other films were Piranha (1978), Orca (1977), Nashville (1975), Herbie Rides Again (1974), The Mechanic (1972), Pretty Maids All in a Row

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JOHN BOOR MAN: Point Blank 1967. 92 min.
Lee Marvin...Walker
Angie Dickinson...Chris
Keenan Wynn...Yost
Carroll O’Connor...Brewster
Lloyd Bochner...Frederick Carter
Michael Strong...Big John Stegman
John Vernon...Mal Reese
Sharon Acker...Lynne Walker
James Sikking...Hired gun

Directed by John Boorman
Based on the novel The Hunter by Richard Stark (Donald E. Westlake)
Script by Alexander Jacobs, David Newhouse & Rafe Newhouse
Produced by Judd Bernard and Robert Chartoff.
Original Music by Stu Gardner (song "Mighty Good Times") and Johnny Mandel
Cinematography by Philip H. Lathrop
Film Editing by Henry Berman
Art Direction by Albert Brenner & George W. Davis
Costume design by Margo Weintz


British director, scenarist, and producer, born in Shepperton, Middlesex, just outside London. [Pineview Shepperton is the location of Europe’s leading Film Studio.] He is the son of George Boorman, a pub landlord of Dutch parentage, and the former Ivy Chapman. The family was Protestant, but Boorman was educated at the Jesuit Salesian School in Chertsey, and Alexander Walker ascribes to this training Boorman’s interest in “the Catholic idea of the Grail quest,” a central theme in his work. “Jung attracts him, rather than Freud,” Walker says, “and Jungian archetypes figure in his films, especially the warrior types like the modern ‘samurai’ in Hell in the Pacific and the hunters in Deliverance and Point Blank. He is an odd, complex man to find in the British film scene.”

Boorman left school at the age of sixteen going into partnership with a friend to open what became a thriving dry cleaning business. He also aspired, unsuccessfully, to becoming a county cricketer but had better luck as a teenage journalist, writing film reviews for a girls’ magazine and contributing to other magazines and newspapers as well as to British Broadcasting Corporation radio programs. His involvement with the dry-cleaning business more or less ended when he began his army national service (1951-1953), but the journalism continued.

In 1955 Boorman joined the newly-formed Independent Television News as an assistant film editor, and during his three years there launched the ITN magazine program Day by Day. He then moved to Southern Television as a director and producer of documentaries (1959-1960) before going over to BBC Television. As head of the BBC’s Documentary Film Unit in Bristol, he was responsible for Citizen ’63, a series of documentaries investigating six assorted citizens who had reached some kind of crisis in their lives and deriving considerable power, according to one critic, from Boorman’s ‘awareness of the disparity between what people say and what they do.’ An even more ambitious documentary series followed in 1964, The Newcomers, a six-part study of a newly married Bristol couple and their friends ending, according to Alexander Walker, with “an Antonioni-esque flourish in which twelve cameras filmed what went on in Bristol in the last half-hour as the birth of twins took place.”

Bristol at that time was something of a “cultural nucleus,” the home of dramatists Charles Wood, Peter Nichols, and Tom Stoppard, among other rising young artists and writers. Wood worked with Boorman on The Newcomers, and Nichols wrote the director’s first film, Catch Us If You Can (1965), made on a leave of absence from the BBC....

More documentaries followed back at the BBC, including one on D.W. Griffith, but Boorman was no longer satisfied with the form. “Film is as familiar as a dream and just as elusive,” he has said. “The Surrealists saw that. Documentaries (and social realism in the cinema) always suffer from this dilemma. The more they try to be ‘real,’ the less convinced we are.” Visiting Los Angeles while making the Griffith documentary...he had found a kindred spirit in the Catholic-educated actor Lee Marvin, and the result was his second feature, Point Blank (MGM, 1967), based on a novel called The Hunter by Richard Stark.

Like its predecessor, Point Blank is the story of a quest—an intensely violent one by a double-crossed gangster (Marvin) for revenge and his cut of the loot. It is a quest that pits this reckless loner against the whole might of “the syndicate,” which is presented as so much a part of the structure of American society that in the end Marvin seems to be taking on an entire nation and its brutal artifacts (in the course of the movie he actually attacks a car, a telephone, and an empty bed; violent rock music amplifies the visual mayhem; the very buildings seem to threaten him). This one-man army cannot possibly win, but he does, only to find that he has lost; at the top of what Jonathan Rosenbaum calls “the mysterious pyramid of power” Martin has to scale “stands an ineffectual clown” who has no money, only credit cards.

There had been signs of originality in Boorman’s first feature, but no one was prepared for the sustained brilliance of his camerawork and editing in Point Blank, beginning with the literally breathtaking speed and violence of the opening night-scene on a deserted Alcatraz. Some critics, indeed, found Boorman’s technical skill almost excessive: “As stunning shot is succeeded by striking effect,” wrote Richard Roud, “one wonders if he isn’t, as the French say, drowning his fish.” There was much praise for the somnambulistic intensity of Marvin’s performance and for the almost palpable sexuality of Angie Dickinson’s. David Thomson calls the movie crucial “in the development of the cinema’s portrait of America as the complex of organised crime. It uses the city [Los Angeles] as a metaphor for society so that all the sites of the city—the prison, the sewers, the apartment building, the used car lot—take on a natural metaphysical significance. The actual and the imaginary are perfectly joined in Point Blank.” Thomson, who makes the interesting suggestion that the movie could be seen as a fantasy invented by the defeated hero as he died, regards Point Blank as a masterpiece. Many critics agree, and some think that Boorman has so far not surpassed it.

Marvin starred again in Boorman’s second American movie, Hell in the Pacific (1968), this time as a World War II flyer stranded on a tiny Pacific island with a Japanese naval officer, played by Toshiro Mifune. The two men have no common language, but they discover through pain, trial, and error that they have other things in common and make a sort of separate peace. Ironically, it is when they do learn to communicate a little that their different mores and training drive them tragically apart. The film, which is as close as Boorman is likely to get to the completely silent movie he wanted to make after working on his Griffith documentary, had a mixed reception. Ingeniously constructed as it is, there are longeurs. One critic called it “a remarkable exercise in sustaining a two-character story-line over feature length, which required all of Boorman’s skills of atmosphere and timing.”

These first three feature films seemed to John Lindsay Brown “unified into a still developing pattern by Boorman’s central concern: the exploration (in the form of parable or allegory) of what happens when the individual asserts his own will in the face of the collectivising influence of conformity in contemporary society. These influences are given different embodiments in each film and are felt with varying degrees of intensity; but no matter what their form, they are always seen as acting to diminish the status of the individual, his sense of identity and his choice of action and behaviour.”

The allegorical content in Leo the Last (1969), made in
Britain for United Artists, seemed to most critics excessive. The film is about an eccentric expatriate prince (Marcello Mastroianni) living in his London mansion in the middle of a black ghetto and observing his neighbors from a safe distance with a telescope. The voyeur prince (the Fisher King?) Eventually becomes emotionally involved and joins the poor blacks in their struggle against heartless property speculators. Bill Stair, who wrote *Leo the Last* in collaboration with the director, also advised on the movie’s color values. In this respect, wrote Alexander Walker, “the film was remarkable: the prevailing black and white was fragmented into a dozen in-between tones in a way a British film seldom attempted, much less achieved. But at the centre of the film there was confusion—and worse—sentimentality. It felt like a throwback to Ealing comedy.” Though the picture brought Boorman the director’s award at Cannes and was a hit in France, it was a box-office disaster in Britain and America.

Boorman made a strong recovery with *Deliverance* (Warner Brothers, 1972), in which four Atlanta suburbanites set off for a weekend canoe trip down a wild Appalachian river that is soon to be spoiled by the construction of a reservoir, deliberately pitting themselves against this imperilled wilderness. Their adventure turns sour when one of them is sodomized by a couple of hate-filled, near-mutant mountain men, and their boyish game turns suddenly into a real struggle for survival and revenge. In the end, it is not the macho Lewis (Burt Reynolds) who turns out to be the best equipped to master the law of the jungle but the decent, rather ineffectual Ed (Jon Voight); he becomes a killer and a leader—a “real man” whose skills are those of a predatory animal. It is an ambiguous “deliverance”—far more so than in the James Dickey novel on which the movie is based.

Stephen Farber found the film “imperfect, constructed by the relentlessness of the allegory” but nevertheless called it “a major work, important for the artistic vision it brings to the urgent question of understanding and redefining masculinity....Boorman’s understanding of the sheer kinesthetic power of film gives *Deliverance* a sensuous immediacy. As an adventure movie, it is absolutely uncompromising; you know [Vilmos Zsigmond’s] camera is in there with the actors as they shoot the rapids....John Boorman has always been underestimated by critics, although he is one of the most gifted directors working anywhere in the world. He has never really been interested in psychological realism. All of his movies....are abstract, dreamlike, surrealistic; they examine archetypes, not individuals.” *Deliverance*, a financial success, seemed to Alexander Walker to offer further evidence that Boorman is “enviably free of the shackles of English insularity. Her is able to hear echoes of his themes anywhere in the world. He does not need to feel the soil of national tradition securely round his roots—for his art is rooted in the interior landscape of the imagination.”

Boorman wrote and produced his next picture himself and filmed it in County Wicklow, Ireland, where—attending an auction after a boozy lunch—he had bought the Georgian rectory on forty acres of land which has been his home ever since. *Zardoz* (1974) is set in the year 2293. The world has become a wasteland, except for a lush oasis called the Vortex, inhabited by the Eternals, a privileged group who live beautiful lives, free of pain, disease, and death. It is a perfect society, but an empty and pointless one until the arrival of an outsider—a natural man (Sean Connery), who brings the Eternals what they need to give shape and savor to their lives: the gift of death. *Zardoz* is an unconventional piece of science fiction, with sumptuous and vaguely medieval costumes designed by Boorman’s wife Christel, music played on ancient instruments, and literary underpinnings ranging from the Grail legends to Frank L. Baum (whose most famous work explains the film’s title).

Nothing came of the director’s plan to film Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* and his next movie was *Exorcist II: The Heretic* (Warner Brothers, 1977), which he co-produced with Richard Lederer....Few movies have ever had a more scornful reception. ...

Part of the trouble, no doubt, was that Boorman had failed to satisfy the demand for sexual and spiritual exploitation aroused by the original and had attempted something much more ambitious. The director found the film’s reception “a terrible experience” but said: “I don’t apologise for *The Heretic* and it contains some of the best things I have done.” There are signs that at least some critics are coming round to this view. One in *Film Directions* said it was “a work of the creative imagination, quite exclusively visual, and to express its content verbally is to make nonsense of its structural logic.”

In 1981 Boorman released *Excalibur*, a screen epic about King Arthur and Camelot....Making a film of the Arthur legend was a project that had fascinated Boorman for twenty years. He explained its appeal to Michael Owen in 1981: “It is something that speaks to the unconscious. The imagery, the iconography, I believe it is all something fundamental to the human psyche....I believe [this subject] belongs rightfully to the cinema. Only a film can convey the dreams, the magic, the imagery, the romance.” Boorman addressed many of the same concerns in his next film, *The Emerald Forest* (1985). Shot at great hardship on location along the Xingu River in Brazil, it is loosely based on a true story of an engineer’s child (played by Boorman’s son Charley) who was kidnapped and raised by a tribe of Amazonian Indians. In the Boorman version, the engineer (Powers Boothe) searches for his son for a decade; when they finally meet, the engineer is himself drawn into the life of the tribe and initiated in its shamanistic rites. His eyes are opened to the barrenness and cruelty of his own culture, and his mission of rescue is gradually altered as he apprehends the probable fate of these Stone Age people....Although some critics felt that Boorman had overreached himself in *The Emerald Forest*, this was his biggest box-office success since *Deliverance*. The action sequences were deemed exciting, the cinematography spectacular, and the heavily romanticized portrayal of tribal life seemed to go down well with audiences. “Like some of the films of Werner Herzog,” wrote Janet Maslin, “*The Emerald Forest* gives the impression of having been at least as suspenseful to make as it is to watch. In this case, that leads to an immediacy that makes the film, even in its more patently contrived moments, feel important and real.”

A writer in *Film Dope* says that Boorman’s “mastery of cinematic language is astounding; he employs an extensive range of stylistic references which instead of creating the chaos one might expect, are formed into a personal style and lead to a great richness of expression....he is a fine visual stylist who continues to refine and extend his technique.” David Thomson has gone so far as to call him “the most important British director functioning today,” and Michel Ciment has spoken of “the enchantment of a cinema whose sense of spectacle [is] never allowed to degenerate into futile escapism, a cinema whose reflections on contemporary life [are] never dully demonstrative.” On the other hand Boorman has been accused on intellectual pretentiousness, of making films “just fuzzy enough to seem complex,” and of having “sold out.” He himself admits that working within the commercial framework
involves endless compromise, but says he needs the technical resources of the major studios: “Film is a living language and I’m interested in getting as many people as possible to understand it.” His next project was an autobiographical film about growing up during the Blitz.

From GO Brooklyn, September 11, 2004 review of “The Adventures of John Boorman,”

by Kevin Filipski

The eleven films in the BAN retro range from 1965’s “Catch Us if You Can,” his debut feature starring the Dave Clark Five, a faddish British Invasion band that rode the crest of the Beatles’ wave in the early 60’s, to 1995’s “Beyond Rangoon.” (His most recent feature, the riveting 1998 gangster pic, “The General,” will not be screened.) The series—which also includes his nervy, unsettling adaptation of James Dickey’s novel “Deliverance” (1972)—is bookended by his two strongest pictures, opening with his World War II reminiscence, 1987’s “Hope and Glory,” and ending with another WWII-era film, the riveting Lee Marvin-Toshiro Mifune mini-psychedrama, “Hell in the Pacific” (1968).

Boorman’s films often have a curious history; in several instances they were critically drubbed upon release, only to see their reputations grow over time, not unlike the films of Stanley Kubrick. His strangely compelling fictional biopic “Leo the Last” (1970), starring Marcello Mastroianni; his futuristic epic “Zardoz” (1974), with Sean Connery; and most outrageously of all, “Exorcist II: The Heretic” (1977), with Richard Burton, have all seen initial boos turn into braves as the years go by.

Boorman himself is perplexed about this development.

“I can’t explain why some of my films have grown in reputation as time passed, except that all films either grow or diminish with time,” he said. “Probably the films you mention [“Leo the Last,” “Zardoz” and “The Heretic”] are unconventional, even original in style, which is always disturbing to audiences. Time magazine called “Point Blank” “a fog of a film” and many people found it perplexing. When it was revived years later, all those problems seem to have disappeared. The film had not changed, but the audience had.”

That goes double for “Exorcist II,” which found critics reaching for their thesauri to condemn the movie as vociferously as they praised the original William Friedkin classic. Boorman defends his work on that film by returning to the source material: William Peter Blatty’s best-selling novel.

“I was offered “The Exorcist” but turned it down,” he insists. “I found it repulsive as a book: it was all about torturing a child. I saw ‘The Heretic’ as a riposte to the [original], the healing and burgeoning of that child and her redemption, which is why I wanted to make it. The audience rejected it because they wanted more shocks and blood [like the original].”

Along with his films—which are unanimously praised for their varied location shooting—Boorman has kept the art of cinema moving forward by serving as director of the British Film Institute and the co-editor of the excellent “Perspectives” series of film anthology books.

One recent development that every director must now deal with is the ascension of DVD to a level now surpassing that of initial theatrical runs. Boorman sees it quite rightly as a necessary evil, but hopes to subvert its seeming preeminence over the actual work itself.

“Directors are now required to do a commentary for the DVD,” he says matter of factly. “But, he happily admits, “I have never added in extra scenes [for the DVD, where ‘deleted scenes’ have become a standard marketing tool]. I have always had final cut [on my films], so for better or worse the released version is mine.”

Yet is was with 1987’s “Hope and Glory” that Boorman began what has been a run of his most beautifully structured and emotionally satisfying films. “Hope and Glory” explored the roots of his fascination with nonconformity, his dissatisfaction with ordinary life and his belief that creation starts in destruction. The film was his reminiscence of growing up during the Blitz. Cutting through the stiff-upper-lip reverence with which that era has usually been depicted in the movies (“Mrs. Miniver” being the most famous example), Boorman portrayed the Blitz as a great national holiday, with Hitler’s bombs uncorsetting the British. The two films that followed, “Where the Heart Is” (1990), a comedy based on his adult family life written with his daughter Telesche, and “Beyond Rangoon,” the story of an American tourist (played by Patricia Arquette) caught up in that country’s democracy demonstrations, were both dumped by their studios and, with the exception of a handful of perceptive critics, idiotically reviewed. They remain two of the decade’s undiscovered jewels.

The central figure of “The General” is Martin Cahill (played by Brendan Gleeson), an Irish career burglar who became something of a folk hero. Boorman, who lives in Ireland, had long been fascinated by Cahill—particularly since Cahill had broken into the director’s home (an incident alluded to in “The General” when Cahill swaps a gold record during a burglary). Raucous, brutal and tender, the film offers a complex and unresolved portrait of Cahill, neither admiring nor judgmental.

[Boorman] “Where the Heart Is” was about the ambiguity between discipline, the values that hold a family together and the notions that can pull it apart. And that’s, I think, an interesting subject. I mean, what you’re looking at today is the disintegration of family. You can talk as much as you like about family values in a political...
sense, and the reason these politicians insist on this so much is because of the insecurity. Everyone’s afraid of the way families are disintegrating now and nobody knows what replaces that or what they do about it. Everyone is aware of the misery and unhappiness that comes about through that, and yet it just seems to be inevitable somehow.

[Taylor] In “Where the Heart Is,” the family is strengthened by making the bonds more flexible.

[Boorman] Yes, and it’s also about art, isn’t it? It’s about the liberating nature of art, somehow.

[Taylor] This might seem like a weird notion, but in some ways it seems to me to be the sequel to “Point Blank” (1967). In that film, Lee Marvin is trying to act as a free agent but finds out he’s being manipulated by an organization. And in “Where the Heart Is,” Suzy Amis plays an artist who takes on an assignment from an organization but goes about turning it into a means of personal expression. That must have had a particular meaning for you as you’ve tried to work within the movie business while Hollywood has gotten more and more rigid/label, the French critics Nino Frank and Jean-Pierre Chartier wrote the two earliest essays to identify a departure in film-making, the American ‘film noir’. Although they were not thought of in the United States as films noirs (the French label did not become widely known there until the 1970s), numerous post-war Hollywood movies seemed to confirm the French judgement that a new type of American film had emerged, very different from the usual studio product and capable of conveying an impression of ‘certain disagreeable realities that do in truth exist’.

The Hollywood releases of 1945 included Edgar G. Ulmer's Detour, Michael Curtiz's Mildred Pierce and three films noirs directed by Fritz Lang - Ministry of Fear, Scarlet Street and The Woman in the Window. In 1946 David Goodis published the first of his crime novels, Dark Passage, and Delmer Daves began filming it; in the spring and summer months of 1946 alone, Hollywood released Blue Dahlia (George Marshall), Dark Corner (Henry Hathaway), The Postman Always Rings Twice (Tay Garnett), Gilda (Charles Vidor), The Killers (Robert Siodmak) and The Big Sleep (Howard Hawks). In the same year Gallimard brought out French translations of two of Horace McCoy's novels, the first American novels to be included in the Série Noire.

The Iconic Figures of Film Noir
The figure of the hard-boiled detective is often taken to be one of the defining features of film noir, particularly as exemplified by Humphrey Bogart, whose performances as Sam Spade in The Maltese Falcon and as Marlowe in The Big Sleep established him as the iconic private eye. Revisions of the detective story were, however, only one element in the phenomenon, and Bogart's place as 'a key iconographic figure in all of film noir' was secured by the fact that he was cast, as well, in a range of non-investigative films noirs, such as High Sierra (1941), Dark Passage (1946) and In a Lonely Place (1950). Bogart's roles in them suggest the different forms noir took as it developed during forties. In addition to the weary integrity of the private eye, there was the pathos of the ageing gangster (Roy 'Mad Dog' Earle in High Sierra), the desperation of the 'wrong man' (the escaped convict wrongly accused of his wife's murder in Dark Passage) and the violence of the suspected psychopath (the self-destructive writer in In a Lonely Place).

In creating this range of films noirs, Hollywood drew on the work both of earlier writers (especially, of course, Hammett and Chandler) and of the late forties-early fifties novelists who were writing crime fiction that very often had no role for the private eye. Amongst those whose work was adapted during this period

Lee Horsely: The Development of Post-war Literary and Cinematic Noir (crimeculture.com)

The years immediately following the end of World War Two marked the start of a crucial phase in the creation, definition and popularising of both literary and cinematic noir. There were several concurrent developments: the Hollywood production of a growing number of pessimistic, downbeat crime films, the post-war release in Europe of a large backlog of American films, the publication in France of a new series of crime novels and the appearance in America of a new kind of book, the paperback original. Films released in America just before the end of the war, such as Billy Wilder's Double Indemnity and Edward Dmytryk's Murder, My Sweet (both 1944), were taken as evidence, when they appeared in France, that 'the Americans are making dark films too'.

In 1945, under the editorship of Marcel Duhamel, Gallimard started publishing its translations of British and American crime novels in the the Série Noire. In 1946, echoing the Gallimard
were W.R. Burnett, David Goodis, Dorothy B. Hughes, William Lindsay Gresham, Horace McCoy and William P. McGivern, all of whom produced novels that had as their protagonists violent, self-deceived men, criminals, crooked cops, killers, psychotics.

One of the most important influences on noir characterisation was the work of Cornell Woolrich, whose novels embodied in an extreme form the noir sense of helplessness and paranoia. Between 1942 and 1949, there were eleven Woolrich novels or stories made into films, the protagonists of which include a man hypnotised into thinking he is a murderer (Fear in the Night) and a mind-reader who predicts his own death (Night Has a Thousand Eyes), as well as alcohols, amnesiacs, hunted men and fall guys. Private eye films continued, of course, to be made, but if investigative figures were included, they tended to become increasingly vulnerable and flawed - for example, Bogart's confused, hunted Rip Murdoch in John Cromwell's Dead Reckoning (1947), Robert Mitchum as the traumatised Jeff Markham in Out of the Past (Jacques Tourneur, 1947), Edmund O'Brien as the dying protagonist hunting his own killers in Rudolph Maté's D.O.A. (1950).

The other key iconic figure of noir is, of course, the fatal woman, who poses seductively both on film posters and on hundreds of mid-twentieth century pulp covers. The elements of the image are a kind of visual shorthand for perilous attraction and steamy corruption. Sometimes the dangerous woman is simply a sexual predator who tempts and weakens a male protagonist; sometimes she actually imitates male aggression and appropriates male power. On the poster or pulp cover she perhaps holds only a cocktail glass and a smouldering cigarette, or she might hold a gun and might by the end of the narrative have pulled the trigger. Constrained by the Hays Code, Hollywood tended to package the femme fatale narrative in ways that ensured the defeat of the independent female, but such was the power of the image of the sexual, aggressive, strong woman that she in many ways, in the minds of audiences, resisted this formulaic reassertion of male control.

Definitions of Film Noir

Both literary and cinematic noir can be seen as closely related to the modernist crisis of culture – as reflecting the feelings of nightmarish alienation, disorientation and disintegration that are often taken as hallmarks of the modernist sensibility. James Naremore, in his recent analysis of the contexts of film noir (More Than Night), suggests that the French critics who, in the mid-1940s, first applied the term 'film noir' might well have agreed on a formulation that defined noir as 'a kind of modernism in the popular cinema'. Modernism might seem to be separated from both Hollywood and pulp fiction by such qualities as its formal complexity and technical display, its aesthetic self-consciousness, its association with high culture and its rejection of classical narrative. But with its 'extraordinary compound' of apparently contradictory elements, modernism did encompass many impulses that found natural expression in a popular genre engaged in undermining the essentially optimistic thrust of other popular forms, such as detective and action adventure stories.

Discussions of noir often centre on visual and specifically cinematic elements – on things like low-key lighting, chiaroscuro effects, deep focus photography, extreme camera angles and expressionist distortion. But it is essential as well to take account of themes, mood, characterisation, point of view and narrative pattern. Both literary and cinematic noir are defined by: (i) the subjective point of view; (ii) the shifting roles of the protagonist; (iii) the ill-fated relationship between the protagonist and society (generating the themes of alienation and entrapment); and (iv) the ways in which noir functions as a socio-political critique.

The representation of the protagonist's subjectivity is crucial - his perceptions (both accurate and deluded), his state of mind, his desires, obsessions and anxieties. The need for attending to the handling of perspective in film noir is concisely summed up in Fritz Lang's explanation of his subjective camera work: 'You show the protagonist so that the audience can put themselves under the skin of the man'; by showing things 'wherever possible, from the viewpoint of the protagonist' the film gives the audience visual and psychological access to his nightmarish experiences....

Coming up in the Buffalo Film Seminars XII, Spring 2006

Mar 7 Fred Zinneman A Man for All Seasons 1966
Mar 21 Robert Bresson Au hazard Balthazar 1966
Mar 28 Richard Brooks In Cold Blood 1967
Apr 4 Ousmane Sembene Xala 1974
Apr 11 Wim Wenders Wings of Desire 1987
Apr 18 Andre Konchalovsky Runaway Train 1985

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