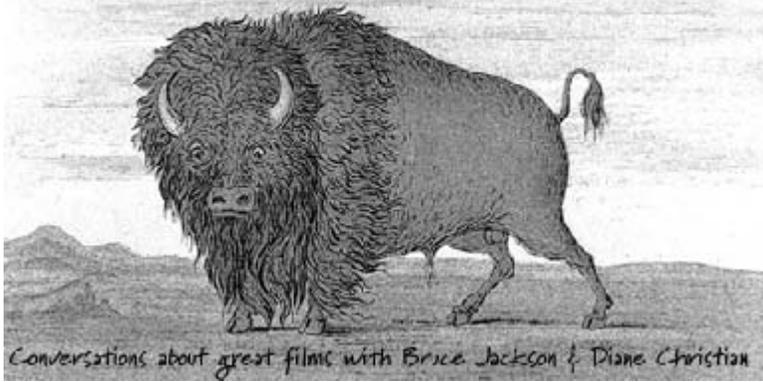


The Buffalo Film Seminars



SUNSET BOULEVARD (1950) Paramount, 110 minutes

National Film Registry 1989. **Academy Awards for Art Direction/Set Direction (Black and White), Music, Writing (story and screenplay), Nominations for Best Actor (Holden), Supporting Actor (von Stroheim), Actress (Swanson), Supporting Actress (Olson), Cinematography, Director, Film Editing, Picture.**

- William Holden**...Joe Gillis
- Gloria Swanson**...Norma Desmond
- Erich von Stroheim**...Max Von Mayerling
- Nancy Olson**...Betty Schaefer
- Fred Clark** ...Sheldrake
- Lloyd Gough**...Morino
- Jack Webb**...Artie Green
- Franklyn Farnum**...Undertaker
- Larry J. Blake**...First Finance Man
- Charles Dayton** ...Second Finance Man
- Cecil B. DeMille**...Himself
- Hedda Hopper**...Herself
- Buster Keaton**...Himself
- Anna Q. Nilsson**...Herself
- H.B. Warner**...Himself
- Ray Evans** ...Himself
- Jay Livingston**...Himself
- Sidney Skolsky**...Himself

DIRECTOR **Billy Wilder**
SCREENPLAY **Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder, and D.M. Marshman, Jr.** based on Brackett's and Wilder's story, "A Can of Beans"
PRODUCER **Charles Brackett**
MUSIC **Jay Livingston** ("The Paramount-Don't-Want-Me Blues"), **Richard**

Indiscreet 1931. Some of her other 70 screen roles: *What a Widow!* 1930, *Sadie Thompson* 1928, *Wages of Virtue* 1924, *Manhandled* 1924, *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* 1923, *Don't Tell Everything* 1921, *Why Change Your Wife?* 1920, *For Better, for Worse* 1919, *Don't Change Your Husband* 1919, and *The Romance of an American Duchess* 1915. She received Oscar nominations: for *Sunset Boulevard*, *The Trespasser* 1928, and *Sadie Thompson* 1928.

WILLIAM HOLDEN (William Franklin Beedle Jr., 17 April 1918, O'Fallon, Illinois—16 November 1981, Santa Monica, California, injuries from a fall) appeared in nearly 80 films, beginning as a convict in *Prison Farm* 1938 and ending as a crusty, ironic, decent guy in another movie about Hollywood, Blake Edwards's *S.O.B.* 1981. Some of his other notable films were *Network* 1976, *The Towering Inferno* 1974, *The Blue Knight* 1973 a network made-for-tv movie, yeah, but sometimes even they got it right, *The Wild Bunch* 1969, *The World of Suzie Wong* 1960, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* 1957, *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* 1955, *Picnic* 1955, *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* 1954, *Stalag 17* 1953, *The*

BILLY WILDER (Samuel Wilder, Sucha, Austria-Hungary, 22 June 1906) wrote more than 60 screenplays and directed 24. Some of the films he wrote and directed are *Irma a Douce* 1963, *The Apartment* 1960, *Some Like it Hot* 1959, *The Spirit of St. Louis* 1957, *Witness for the Prosecution* 1957, *The Seven Year Itch* 1955, *The Lost Weekend* (1945), *Double Indemnity* 1944. He was nominated for 21 Oscars and won 7 of them, as well as the Academy's Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award (1988), the American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award (1986), and nearly every other international major award given to directors. For more on him visit www.geocities.com/hollywood/cinema/1012/wilder.html

CHARLES BRACKETT (26 November 1892, Saratoga Springs, New York—9 March 1969) produced and co-wrote several classic films, many of them for and with Wilder. He was, for example, producer and one of the writers of *Titanic* 1953, *Niagara* 1953, *A Foreign Affair* 1948, *The Lost Weekend* 1945, and *Ninotchka* 1939. He won an Honorary Academy Award in 1958, and a screenwriting Oscar for *Titanic*. He also shared Oscars with Wilder for the scripts of *Sunset Boulevard* and *The Lost Weekend*, and nominations for *A Foreign Affair*, *Hold Back the Dawn* 1941, and *Ninotchka*.

GLORIA SWANSON (27 March 1899, Chicago—4 April 1983, New York, natural causes) was one of the great and beautiful stars of the silent era. Like a lot of old-time stars, she took to playing herself grown old in her last few films, e.g. *Airport 1975* 1974. Her first screen appearance was in *The Fable of Elvira and Farina and the Meal Ticket* 1915, about which nobody seems to know anything. He most recent screen role before *Sunset Boulevard* gave her a second career playing faded old-time actresses (see the quotation from her below), was in *Father Takes a Wife* 1941, and her role before that was a full decade earlier in

Moon Is Blue 1953, *Born Yesterday* 1950, *Our Town* 1940 and *Golden Boy* 1939. He won a best actor Oscar for *Stalag 17*, and was nominated for *Network* and *Sunset Boulevard*.

ERICH VON STROHEIM (Erich Oswald Stroheim, 22 September 1885, Vienna, Austria—12 May 1957, Paris) was the son of a Jewish hatter in Vienna and didn't pick up the "von" until shortly after he left Europe in his early



20's. He directed 12 films, including the most famous film no one ever saw, the 7-hour-long *Greed* 1925, based on Frank Norris's novel *McTeague*. Under great pressure from Irving Thalberg, he cut it down to 4 hours; the studio cut another hour before the film was released. For years it was available only in a 2:20 version, but there's a 4 hour videotape available now. In the original black and white release prints, everything yellow was tinted by hand: gold coins, a brass bed, tooth fillings, even the canary. Von Stroheim took his directing very seriously, which is probably why they didn't let him do it very often. He acted in more than 70 films, beginning with an uncredited role as a man shot from the roof in *Birth of a Nation* 1915 (a stunt in which he broke two ribs), and including his superb performance in tonight's film as Max von Mayerling, a former director turned Norma Desmond's driver. His most famous screen role was as the German prison camp commandant, Captain von Rauffenstein, in Jean Renoir's *La Grande Illusion* (1937). The Nazis hated that film because one of the central characters was a non-caricatured Jew played by a Jewish actor—Rosenthal played by Marcel Dalio—and because the primary vision of the German military was as jailors. They surely would have hated it more had they known that the senior German officer in the film was also played by a Jew, albeit one who made his career mimicking monocled Prussians.

NANCY OLSON (14 July 1928, Milwaukee, Wisconsin) appeared in 20 films, not one of which (other than this one) will you ever see in any other BFS Tuesday night at the Market Arcade. Some of those

films you'll have to go elsewhere to experience are *Flubber* 1997, *The Walt Disney Comedy and Magic Revue* 1985, *Airport* 1975 1974, *Snowball Express* 1972, *Son of Flubber* 1963, *The Absent-Minded Professor* 1961, *Pollyanna* 1960, *So Big* 1953, *Force of Arms* 1951, *Mr. Music* 1950, and *Canadian Pacific* 1949. Well, maybe *Airport* 1975. That one is so tacky it's transcendent—and it does have Helen Reddy as Sister Ruth, Gloria Swanson as Gloria Swanson, and Larry Storch, Norman Fell, Jerry Stiller, Dana Andrews, Myrna Loy, Erik Estrada....there is no end to this. I better stop with these names before I lose control and call Mike Clement and tell him to book this monsterpiece of foolishness....

JOHN F. SEITZ (23 June 1892, Chicago—27 February 1979, Woodland Hills, California) shot about 160 films, beginning with *The Ranger of Lonesome Gulch* 1916 and ending with *Island of Lost Women* 1959. He was nominated for six Academy Awards: *Rogue Cop* 1954, *When Worlds Collide* 1951, *Sunset Blvd.* 1950, *The Lost Weekend* 1945, *Sullivan's Travels* 1942, *Five Graves to Cairo* 1943, and *The Divine Lady* 1929. Some of his other films were *Botany Bay* 1953, *Captain Carey, U.S.A.* 1950, *The Great Gatsby* 1949, *Night Has a Thousand Eyes* 1948, *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* 1944, *Hail the Conquering Hero* 1944, *This Gun for Hire* 1942 *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* 1939, *The Littlest Rebel* 1935, *The Prisoner of Zenda* 1922 and *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* 1921.

FROM (Jeffrey Meyers, introduction to the script of *Sunset Boulevard* U. Cal Press 1999:

During his fifty-year career Wilder has shown astonishing versatility—and real genius—as both coauthor and director (beginning in 1943) of films about war, murder, alcoholism, Hollywood, sensational journalism, prison camps, trials and aviation, as well as of dazzling romantic comedies...and bittersweet love stories....

Explaining his need for a coauthor, Wilder said: "I started the idea of collaborating when I first arrived in America, because I could not speak the language. I needed somebody who was responsible who had some idea of how a picture is constructed. Then I found out that it's nice to have a collaborator—you're not writing into a vacuum, especially if he's sensitive and ambitious to create a product of some value." After several years of screenwriting hackwork...his career took off in 1938 when he began a long and fruitful collaboration with Charles Brackett. They began with witty and intelligent movies like *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*, *Ninotchka* and *Ball of Fire* and ended with their greatest film, *Sunset Boulevard*....

Born in 1892, fourteen years before Wilder, Brackett graduate from Williams College and Harvard Law School, was a vice-consul in France and a lieutenant in World War I. He practiced law, wrote two novels, and was the drama critic for the *New Yorker* before coming to Hollywood, two years before Wilder. The sophisticated Easterner helped the young émigré master his new language and refine his skills as a screenwriter. Wilder later recalled what he learned from Brackett: "He spoke excellent English. He was a very classy guy, a couple of pegs above the ordinary Hollywood writer. He was very patient with me but he also insisted on my English becoming less ridiculous than it was then. I went to a good school—it lifted my English a few pegs." Wilder, with the energy of a hyperactive child, would pace the room and walk out, disappear from the office, and suddenly stroll back in. He was brash and rebellious, cynical and sardonic. Brackett—silver haired, courtly, and reserved—was well known for his patrician manners and refined conversation, his elegant style, well-turned epigrams, and conservative suits.

Wilder also explained how they worked—and often quarreled—together and how they complemented each other's personalities: "Two collaborators who think exactly alike is a waste of time. Dialogue or whatever comes from: 'Not quite, but you are close to it. Let's find something that we both like. This is a little bit too cheap, this is too easy. This character is not developed. I am a Roosevelt man and you are a Republican.'

Unless there are sparks that fly, it is totally unnecessary to have a collaborator." Brackett disliked some of Wilder's essential qualities—his wildness, misanthropy, cruelty, and sense of the macabre. They had great battles, yelling and screaming at each other. The third screenwriter who collaborated on *Sunset Boulevard*, D.M. Marshman, Jr., a *Life* magazine reporter and film critic, was invited to join the team when he suggested that the aging silent screen actress have an affair with a young Midwestern screenwriter. viii-ix)

Brackett said of their idea of the film: "Wilder, Marshman and I were acutely conscious of the fact that we lived in a town which had been swept by a social change as profound as that brought about in the Old South by the Civil War. Overnight, the coming of sound brushed gods and goddesses into obscurity. We had an idea of a young man stumbling into a great house where one of these ex-goddesses survived. At firsts we saw her as kind of a horror woman...an embodiment of vanity and selfishness. But as we went along, our sympathies became deeply involved with the woman who had been given the brush by 30 million fans." (Quoted in Meyers, ix-x)

For the hero, Joe Gillis, Wilder tried for Montgomery Clift, who refused to make love to an older woman on screen; Fred MacMurray, who had given a fine performance in Wilder's *Double Indemnity*; and even Gene Kelly, before turning to William Holden. When Holden seemed uncertain of how to play his role and told Wilder, "I'm having trouble getting a bead on Joe Gillis," the director replied: "That's easy. Do you know Bill Holden?... Then you know Joe Gillis." (Meyers, x)

Wilder linked silent and sound pictures, Norma's real past and her imaginary present, by using silent-era actors for her bridge party with the "wax works" figures: Buster Keaton; H.B. Warner, who played Christ in DeMille's *King of Kings* (1927); and Anna Q. Nilsson, a Swedish-born star. DeMille, who had directed Swanson in silent movies, appears as himself—for a fee of \$10,000—when Norma visits him at Paramount (her old studio) while he directs *Samson and Delilah*—a variant of the *Salome* script she is writing with Gillis. Kind and sympathetic, the only man Norma defers to, DeMille is complete convincing in the part and, under Wilder's direction, gives a more subtle performance by far than any actor ever did in one of DeMille's own pictures." (Meyers xi.)

MGM head Louis B. Mayer said of the film: “We should horsewhip this Wilder! We should throw him out of this town! He has dirtied the nest! He has brought disgrace on the town that is feeding him!” (Quoted in Meyers, xv)

In her autobiography Swanson ruefully recorded the effect of the
FROM THE WORLD IN A FRAME: WHAT WE SEE IN FILMS. LEO BRAUDY U CHICAGO 1984

The 1950s were the last great period in which films dealt thematically with acting. The change might be indicated by two films directed by Billy Wilder, *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) and *Kiss Me, Stupid* (1964). Gloria Swanson in *Sunset Boulevard* and Dean Martin in *Kiss Me, Stupid* play different versions of their film selves. They both have two faces aesthetically, in a way typical of film and no other form: each faces into the film as a fictional character—Norma Desmond and Dino—and each faces out as a star. Each as they appear in the film is a caricature of the way they might be, save for the self-consciousness involved in taking such a role and the detachment toward the screen self playing the role implies. (William Holden, who narrates *Sunset Boulevard*, even though his character is dead at the beginning of the film, similarly faces inward
FROM ON THE VERGE OF REVOLT: WOMEN IN AMERICAN FILMS OF THE FIFTIES BRANDON FRENCH. UNGAR, 1978.

Billy Wilder’s *Sunset Boulevard*...characterizes ambition as deadly, the scarlet “A” of our twentieth century puritan conscience. And like other *film noir* movies, *Sunset Boulevard* depicts a woman who is more ambitious than the man she covets, calling up the biblical image of a fallen Eve seducing Adam into sin.

However, Norma Desmond, the middle-aged has-been movie queen who seduces and ultimately kills a luckless screenwriter, is not a typically enigmatic “just plain rotten” *film noir* villainess. Nor is Betty Schaefer, with whom the screenwriter falls in love, simply a sweet young contrast to Norma. And Joe Gillis, the object of both women’s desires, is not merely an innocent victim.

In shooting Joe, Norma—like Miss Havisham in Charles Dickens *Great Expectations*, to whom she is obliquely compared in Joe’s narration—strikes out against the defection of her lover, not merely Joe but what Joe symbolizes to her: the audience who has ceased to love her and thereby robs her of her only creative outlet. She also gives vent to a thinly disguised fury against all men. For the central irony of Norma’s existence as a woman is that she is dependent on men, while at the same time she is the powerhouse that supports them.

Not only does Norma keep Max, whom we learn was at one time her director and her first husband, but also Joe. And as the star of twelve DeMille pictures, “his biggest successes,” she asserts her claim to a portion of his maintenance as well. Nonetheless, she is dependent upon Max to protect her from the reality of her abandonment by the outside world, dependent upon Joe to rewrite her script for her and to love her, and dependent upon DeMille to restore her career in the movies. . . .

DeMille represents both the power of the individual and of the institution. As such, he is the most culpable character in *Sunset Boulevard*, and yet he is the least blamed. Or so it seems. In fact, Wilder assaults DeMille in a series of sly and implicit ways.

Throughout the scene in which Norma visits DeMille’s set, we watch DeMille (in jodhpurs and boots) giving orders. His dulcet tones camouflage his control in a grandfatherly benevolence, but everyone around him proceeds in a flurry of humble obedience.

FROM COMPLICATED WOMEN: SEX AND POWER IN PRE-CODE HOLLYWOOD. MICK LASALLE. ST.MARTIN’S, 2000

Gish and Pickford had emerged before America’s entry into World War I. Gloria Swanson broke out as a major star in the aftermath of the Armistice, and in 1920 represented the new breed. A transitional figure, Swanson arrived on the scene just in



role on her career; “I had played the part too well. I may not have got an Academy Award for it, but I had somehow convinced the world once again of that corniest of all theatrical clichés—that on very rare artistic occasions the actor actually becomes the part...Swanson *is* Norma Desmond. Most of the scripts [I was] offered since finishing *Sunset Boulevard* dealt with aging, eccentric actresses.” (Meyers xvi)

and outward at the same time, and we accept what would otherwise be a morbid film joke because of its relevance to such doubleness in the rest of the picture.) Swanson, however, plays a role that is a meditation on her screen image and the relation between the old world of silent films and the new world of the 1950s Hollywood. Within the film, only her former director, Cecil B. DeMille, is still working. The actors who were her contemporaries (Buster Keaton, H.B. Warner, Anna Q. Nilsson) are embalmed with her in the past, playing an eternal bridge game. *Sunset Boulevard* thereby documents the way film stars belong to particular eras and disappear, losing their power, when their personalities are no longer relevant to the needs of their audience. (208-209)

The most telling instance of the nature and scope of this awesome power occurs during a scene with an electrician named Hogeye. DeMille leaves the set momentarily, advising Norma to observe how differently films are being made. In his absence Hogeye recognizes Norma and turns a spotlight on her. Suddenly, members of the cast who formerly worked with her or who remember her films gather around; she is a celebrity again. But when DeMille returns, he sternly commands Hogeye to “turn that light back where it belongs.” Clearly, DeMille decides where the spotlight belongs, and he decides that it does not belong on Norma, although he acts as if he has no power to salvage her career.

DeMille’s “helplessness” is further belied in an implicit way by Wilder’s casting of Gloria Swanson (as well as Erich von Stroheim and Buster Keaton) in *Sunset Boulevard*. In an act of protest against Hollywood’s institutional policy of human discard, Wilder put the spotlight on Swanson, and she became a star once again.

But blaming DeMille for destroying Norma is as misleading as lionizing Wilder for saving Swanson; it mirrors the distinction between the good plantation master and the bad one—a distinction which ignores the slavery that both masters preserve.

Norma, Joe and Betty are drawn together because they are alike. The behavior of each is dictated by the savage, competitive, impersonal world they inhabit, a world in which mutual exploitation is the rule. This spirit of Hollywood is slyly indicted in a subtitle from a fragment of one of Norma’s silent films: “Cast out this wicked dream which has seized my heart.” A heart seized by a wicked dream—the dream of success—is not free to love, except insofar as “love” advances the fulfillment of the dream. Wilder pursues this idea by sabotaging the romance between Betty and Joe. . . . Hollywood, not Norma, dooms Betty and Joe’s romance.



time to be caught between Victorian purity and modern openness. She made sex comedies and sex dramas with no sex, yet sex was on everyone’s mind. She played the glamorous woman who could—if she so chose, but she never chose, but could if she wanted to, but she never wanted to—behave with the same license as a man.

The Swanson formula, an elaborate tease, made her the most popular actress of the first half of the twenties.

... Swanson would have loved to have gone further. Late in life, she lamented "all the puritanical hypocrisy of the early and mid-1920s and grieved that it had persuaded her to have an abortion in
FROM SILENT STARS. JEANINE BASINGER. KNOPF, 1999:

The disappearance of *Queen Kelly* and *Sadie Thompson* for many years, so that modern viewers didn't get to see them even in the rare instances when silent classics were revived, diminished Swanson's reputation as an actress. ("I was a star at twenty-one," said Swanson, "and a has-been at thirty-three.") Although she is known as one of the four "fabulous faces" of American movies—along with Garbo, Crawford and Dietrich—hers is often thought to be the least beautiful, least interesting face of the group. Seeing her animated, alive and moving, and watching her magnificently expressive face at work reveals quite a different story.

There has always been much speculation as to just whom Norma Desmond was modeled on, but it was probably no one actress. She's most likely a combination of the ego of Negri (who always knew what she was doing) and the genuinely crazy Mae Murray (who apparently *never* knew what she was doing). Having Swanson play the part verifies the character, and, in fact, gives the entire story a credibility it might not otherwise have. She's magnificent. Who could know better than she did how to play an exotic diva from the era? Everything about her, from her leopard trim, her cigarette holders, her bangle bracelets, to her bed shaped like a golden swan and her outré open-air automobile seems completely authentic—because it is. And when Norma goes on the lot, to Swanson's old studio Paramount Pictures, and meets her old director Cecil B. DeMille playing himself, everything rings true. For many people in the audience, it was an extraordinary blurring of fact and fiction, since for them it had been less than twenty-five years since it had all been real. Swanson herself was just past fifty years old, yet she and the world of the movie seemed to come from a time and place so remote that few could remember it. When Norma's bridge group meets, and the other players include Anna Q. Nilsson, Buster Keaton, and H.B. Warner, older people in the audience gasped.

And, of course, being able to use clips from the never-released *Queen Kelly* not only gave viewers Norma as she authentically was as a younger woman, but also convinced them it could have been Norma, not Swanson, in the part, because they themselves had never seen it as a Swanson film. This was heady stuff, and when you add in Swanson's imitation of Charlie

FROM FILM NOIR: AN ENCYCLOPEDIA REFERENCE TO THE AMERICAN STYLE, ED. BY ALAIN SILVER & ELIZABETH WARD FROM FILM NOIR: AN ENCYCLOPEDIA REFERENCE TO THE AMERICAN STYLE, ED. BY ALAIN SILVER & ELIZABETH WARD:

With the Western, film noir shares the distinction of being an indigenous American form. Unlike Westerns, noir films have no precise antecedents either in terms of a well-defined literary genre or a period in American history. As a result, what might be termed the noir cycle has a singular position in the brief history of American motion pictures: a body of films that not only presents a cohesive vision of America but that does so in a manner transcending the influences of *auteurism* or genre. Film noir is grounded neither in personal creation nor in translation of another tradition into film terms. Rather it is a self-contained reflection of American cultural preoccupations in film form. In short, it is the unique example of a wholly American film style.

That may seem a substantial claim to make for a group of films whose plots frequently turn on deadly violence or sexual

MOVIES, MOVIES, MOVIES

Join us next week, Tuesday, October 16, for Henri-Georges Clouzot's classic thriller, *Le Salaire de la peur/Wages of Fear* 1953 William Friedkin remade this in 1977 as *Sorcerer*, with hugely expensive special effects and Roy Scheider for his star, but all of that money didn't come close to the astonishing tension created by Clouzot's direction and editing, Armand Thirard's electrifying cinematography, and Yves Montand's brilliant first film performance. We'll see the restored version, 20% longer than what Americans were permitted to see when the film was released here nearly 50 years ago.

There's other great classic movie action this weekend. Come down to MAFAC Sunday at 3:00 for this week's presentation in the MAFAC Sunday Classics series, Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker*. For a complete schedule with descriptions of each film visit

1925 to avoid the scandal of unwed motherhood. Off-screen, she was woman of many affairs, but on-screen Swanson didn't get to play a normal woman with a sex life until *Tonight or Never* (1931), as a singer who finds that her voice improves when she takes a lover.

Chaplin, the superb writing and directing, the other members of a fine cast, the art direction and music, the moody cinematography—you have a masterpiece. Few actresses ever find a role like Norma Desmond. In truth, only one did, and she more than met the challenge. When Swanson rises up in the flickering light coming down from the screen, and with genuine passion—and considerable nuttiness—cries out, "We didn't need dialogue! We had faces!"—her profile stops any arguments.

Over the years, she received many accolades, among them a tribute at the Eastman House in Rochester, New York, where at her retrospective in 1966 she proved herself still a colorful quote machine, saying after the films were shown, "I must say I got fed up looking at this face of mine. First it was a pudding, then it was an old dumpling. Talk about the face that launched a thousand ships—this was a thousand faces that launched I don't know what—a career I guess." She also showed her serious side by saying, "Failure is never easy to deal with. Success is impossible unless you've had the experience. I like making movies better than anything else."

To the end of her life, Gloria Swanson knew how to play her part. No Norma Desmond, she was nevertheless always ready for her close-up. When she was eighty, she was still walking around grandly, carrying a single red rose and demanding that her theme song "Love, Your Magic Spell is Everywhere," be played. ("Her greed for fame is amazing," wrote James Robert Parish.) And yet she never became one of those aging movie stars for whom there is no life, no laughter, no honest human contact. Somewhere deep inside her there still seemed to live that little clown from her Keystone years.

"I hated comedy, because I thought it was ruining my chance for dramatic parts. I didn't realize that comedy is the highest expression of the theatrical art and the best training in the world for other roles.... The mark of an accomplished actor is timing, and it can be acquired only in comedy. Comedy makes you think faster, and after Keystone I was a human lightning conductor." (Swanson, quoted in Basinger)

obsession, whose catalogue of characters includes numbers of down-and-out private eyes, desperate women, and petty criminals. Nor does the visceral unease felt by a viewer who watches a shadowy form move across a lonely street or who hears the sound of car tires creeping over wet asphalt automatically translate into sociological assertions about paranoia or postwar guilt. At the same time, it is clear that the emergence of film noir coincides with these and other popular sentiments at large in America. "Film noir" is literally "black film," not just in the sense of being full of physically dark images, nor of reflecting a dark mood in American society, but equally, almost empirically, as a black slate on which the culture could inscribe its ills and in the process produce a catharsis to help relieve them.

www.sundayclassics.com. And the Jewish Community Center of Greater Buffalo's 17th Annual Film Festival begins Friday and runs through October 13. For film list, screening times and ticket prices go to www.jccbuffalo.org/page21.html.

WORDS & PICTURES

Diane is giving UB's College of Arts and Sciences lecture on October 15 at 8:00 p.m. in UB's Center for the Arts. The title of her talk is **GRATIFIED DESIRE: IDEAS OF EROS IN BLAKE AND "SEX IN THE CITY."** The official UB description of that talk is: "Blake's nude engraving 'Glad Day' and Sarah Jessica Parker's nubile persona in 'Sex in the City' both offer images of erotic affirmation. Where do the ideas on sex in a great religious artist and a racy TV series meet and diverge?" Where indeed! We'll have to go out to CFA to find out.

59 of the photographs Bruce took of wall and fence and kiosk postings and street shrines in lower Manhattan the weekend of September 22 are on display in the exhibit **MISSING PERSONS**, at the Mainstage Wall in the Atrium, Center for the Arts, UB, through October 22. For more info, visit <http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~bjackson/missingpersons.html>

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