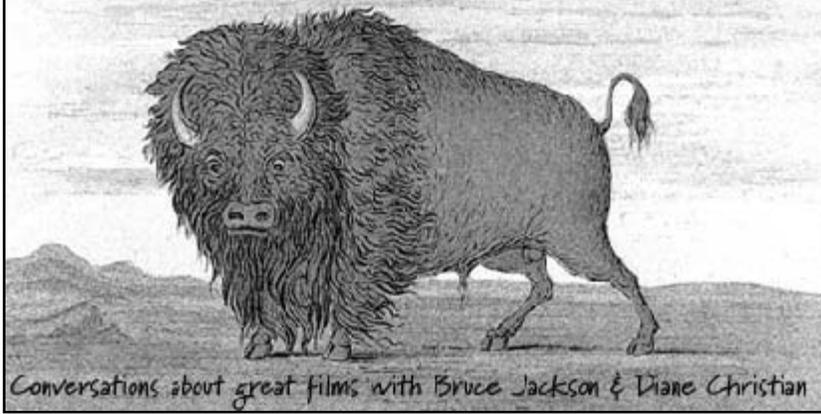


The Buffalo Film Seminars

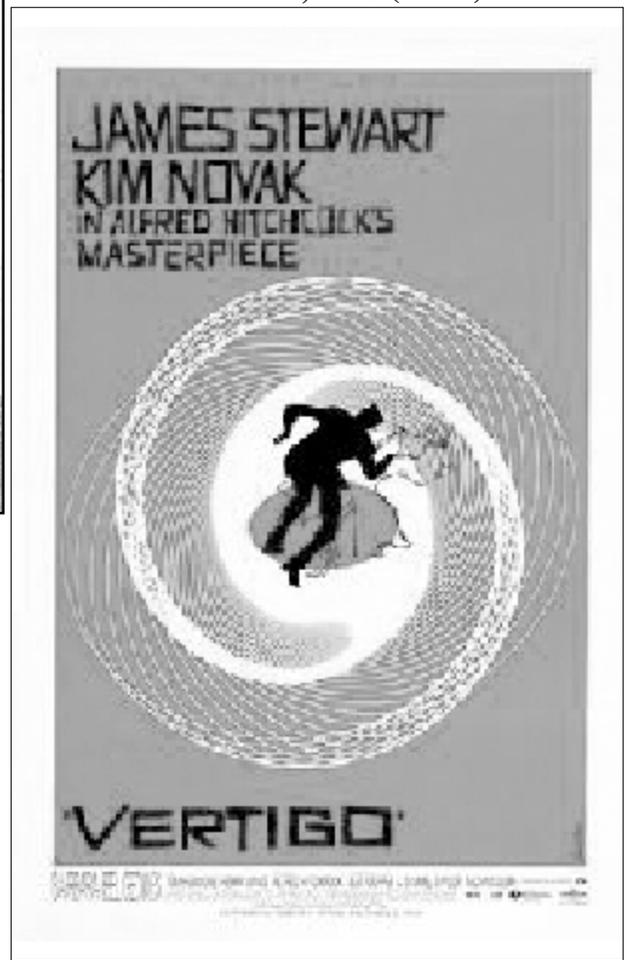


ALFRED HITCHCOCK (13 August 1899, London—29 April 1980, Los Angeles, liver failure and heart problems) was nominated for 5 Academy Awards but the only one he ever got was the Thalberg Award in 1980. That was a very good year for him: he also received a Legion of Honor from the French government and a knighthood from the queen. Directors Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol wrote of him, "Hitchcock is one of the greatest inventors of form in the history of cinema. Perhaps the only filmmakers who can be compared with him in this respect are Murnau and Eisenstein. . . . Here, form does not merely embellish content, but actually creates it." François Truffaut wrote that Hitchcock had "a unique ability to film the thoughts of his characters and make them perceptible without resorting to dialogue," and that he was "almost unique in being able to film directly, that is, without resorting to explanatory dialogue, such intimate emotions as suspicion, jealousy, desire, and envy." (*Notorious* was Truffaut's favorite Hitchcock film.) Critic Andrew Sarris wrote, "What has been most disturbing in Hitchcock's films—the perverse ironies, the unresolved ambiguities, the switched protagonists—now marks him as a pioneer in the modern idiom in which nothing is what it seems on the surface."

Hitchcock left nothing to chance, not even that famous image of him as the plump solemn joker with a taste for the macabre: that was the product of a PR company he set up in the 1930s. Hitchcock began in film as a title designer and art director and he claimed he storyboarded (made scene and motion sketches) for every shot in every one of his 62 films. Some of his films are *Frenzy* 1972, *The Birds* 1963, *Psycho* 1960, *North by Northwest* 1959, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* 1956, *To Catch a Thief* 1955, *Rear Window* 1954, *Dial M for Murder* 1954, *Rope* 1948, *Notorious* 1946, *Spellbound* 1945, *Lifeboat* 1944, *Suspicion* 1941, *Rebecca* 1940, *The Lady Vanishes* 1938, *The 39 Steps* 1935, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* 1934 *Blackmail* 1930 (the first British talkie), and *The Lodger* 1926).

JAMES STEWART (20 May 1908, Indiana, Pennsylvania – 2 July 1997, Los Angeles, pulmonary blood clot) a real-life Eagle Scout, Princeton graduate (architecture) and war hero. According to IMDB he was "the first movie star to enter the service for World War II, joining a year before Pearl Harbor was bombed. He was initially refused entry into the Air Force because he weighed 5 pounds less than the required 148 pounds, but he talked the recruitment officer into ignoring the test. He eventually became a Colonel, and earned the Air Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Croix de Guerre and 7 battle stars. In 1959, served in the Air Force Reserve, he became a brigadier general." "One of America's most beloved actors," wrote Leonard Maltin, "Stewart today is less movie star than cultural icon, a gracefully aged embodiment of values and traditions our nation holds dear, as we are continually reminded by endless broadcasts of his best-remembered film, *It's a Wonderful Life*. The tall, gangly, soft-spoken youth who endeared himself to moviegoers by virtue of his appealing diffidence, boyish earnestness, and innate kindness is the Stewart most film lovers cherish, although he certainly proved that he was much more, especially in his films of the 1950s and 1960s." He was nominated for best actor Oscars for *Anatomy of a Murder* 1959, *Harvey* 1950, *It's a Wonderful Life* 1946, and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* 1939; he won for *The Philadelphia Story* 1940. He also won an honorary Oscar for his whole career in 1985. Some of his other films are *The Shootist* (1976), *Fools' Parade* (1971), *The Cheyenne Social Club* (1970), *The Flight of the Phoenix* (1965), *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964), *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), *The Spirit of St. Louis* (1957), *Rear Window* (1954), *Rope* (1948), *Call Northside 777* (1948), and *Destry Rides Again* (1939).

Kim Novak (13 February 1933, Chicago) **Biography from Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia:** Classical Hollywood sex goddess, blond and buxom, who owed her initial success to her physical allure, but developed into a capable (and at times first-rate) actress. The daughter of a Slavic railway worker, Novak made an inauspicious entry into show business, touring the country as "Miss Deepfreeze" and pitching refrigerators. She also modeled and, as a clotheshorse in the Jane Russell starrer *The French Line* (1954), was spotted by Columbia prexy Harry Cohn, then looking for a sexy star to replace the "difficult" Rita Hayworth. (Cohn's failure to sign Marilyn Monroe some time earlier may well have been the impetus behind his massive effort to groom the husky-voiced blonde for stardom.) She made her Columbia debut in *Phffft!* (1954), and played a femme fatale that same year in *Pushover* Despite her (initially) limited talents,



Novak became a box-office attraction; she worked hard and delivered credible performances in the likes of *The Man With the Golden Arm*, *Picnic* (both 1955), *Jeanne Eagels* and *Pal Joey* (both 1957), among others. By that time she was Hollywood's #1 draw, and her extracurricular relationships with Sammy Davis, Jr., Cary Grant, and Frank Sinatra filled newspaper gossip pages. In 1958 Novak appeared in her two most enduring pictures, both costarring James Stewart: Alfred Hitchcock's obsessive, sinister *Vertigo* (in a "dual" role as Stewart's suicidal girlfriend and as a lookalike molded in the dead woman's image) and Richard Quine's *Bell, Book and Candle* (as a fetching witch). She acquitted herself well in 1960's soap opera *Strangers When We Meet* two 1962 comedies, *Boys' Night Out* and *The Notorious Landlady* and tried, valiantly but unsuccessfully, to do justice to the role of the vulgar waitress in the 1964 remake of Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*. She showed a cunning sense of humor in Billy Wilder's notorious *Kiss Me, Stupid* (1964), and essayed a "female Tom Jones" in *The Amorous Adventures of Moll Flanders* (1965). Personal problems and changing audience tastes sent her career into a tailspin later in the decade, and her highly touted comeback feature, *The Legend of Lylah Clare* (1968), failed to generate much enthusiasm. She has worked in film infrequently since then, appearing in *The Great Bank Robbery* (1969), *Tales That Witness Madness* (1973), *White Buffalo* (1977), *Just a Gigolo* (1979), *The Mirror Crack'd* (1980, still glamorous playing a bitchy actress), and, in a pair of interesting character parts, in *The Children* (1990) and *Liebestraum* (1991). She has made occasional TV appearances over the years, starring as an aging showgirl in *The Third Girl From the Left* (1973), toplining an "Alfred Hitchcock Presents" revival in the 1980s, and joining the regular cast of "Falcon Crest" for its 1986-87 season. She was married at one time to actor Richard Johnson.

Barbara Bel Geddes (31 October 1922, New York City) **Biography from Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia**: A muchpraised stage actress (and daughter of noted stage designer Norman Bel Geddes) before making her film debut in 1947's *The Long Night* Bel Geddes earned an Oscar nomination the following year for her appealing performance as the aspiring authoress whose first-person narration frames *I Remember Mama* (1948). But she preferred the stage to films, and appeared in only a handful over the next few decades, though most were for leading directors, including *Blood on the Moon* (1948), *Caught* (1949), *Panic in the Streets* (1950), *Fourteen Hours* (1951), *Vertigo* (1958, arguably her most memorable screen role), *The Five Pennies*, *Five Branded Women* (both 1959), *By Love Possessed* (1961), and *Summertime* (1971). In the 1970s and 1980s she played Miss Ellie, one of the few decent characters in the wildly popular prime-time soap "Dallas."

from Film Noir. Films of Trust & Betrayal. Paul Duncan. Pocket Essentials. Great Britain 2000

This is one of the great stories of obsession, a recurring theme in Hitchcock's work. It shows how an intelligent man can make the same mistakes over and over again, reliving it in his mind. How can he trust other people when he cannot even trust himself? However, the opportunity arises for him to make his dream come true once more—he cannot resist living his dream again. And then, for the third time in his life, he makes a big mistake.

The key to this extraordinary work is the visit to the Sequoias. We see a cross-section of an old tree trunk, and history is shown repeating itself through wars and treaties. And the name of the tree translates as "Always green, everlasting." This explains why when we first see Madeleine, and then later Judy Barton, she is wearing green, and in profile.

Madeleine even drives a green car. Also, the green light (from the neon light) bathes Judy when she is transformed back into Madeleine. Carlotta becomes Madeleine becomes Judy—they are objects of love reincarnated, remade, over and over. They are everlasting, because Scottie will always love her, even after death. It's a romantic, gothic idea played out in bright sunshine.

Vertigo Charles Barr BFI Publishing London 2002

Jonathan Coe observes that 'like many of the very greatest films, *Vertigo* is open—and has been subjected—to a variety of different interpretations'. Susan White elaborates this: in the years since it became widely available, *Vertigo* has been analysed by a wide range of critics as a tale of male aggression and visual control; as a map of the female Oedipal trajectory; as a deconstruction of the male construction of femininity and masculinity itself; as a stripping bare of the mechanisms of directorial, Hollywood studio and colonial oppression; and as a place where textual meanings play out in an infinite regress of self-reflexivity.

VERTIGO, 1958, 128 minutes
selected for National Film Registry
1989

James Stewart....Det. John 'Scottie' Ferguson
Kim Novak....Madeleine Elster/Judy Barton
Barbara Bel Geddes....Midge Wood
Tom Helmore....Gavin Elster
Henry Jones....Coroner
Raymond Bailey....Scottie's doctor
Ellen Corby....Manager of McKittrick Hotel
Konstantin Shayne....Pop Leibel
Alfred Hitchcock....Man walking past boatyard (uncredited)

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock
Writing credits Pierre Boileau (novel ...*d'Entre les Morts*) and Thomas Narcejac (novel ...*d'Entre les Morts*), Samuel A. Taylor & Alec Coppel
Produced by Alfred Hitchcock (uncredited), and for the 1996 restoration James C. Katz
Cinematography by Robert Burks
Film Editing by George Tomasini
Art Direction by Henry Bumstead, Hal Pereira
Costume Design by Edith Head
Special Effects by Farciot Edouart (process photography), John P. Fulton (special photographic effects), W. Wallace Kelley (process photography)
Saul Bass title designer
Robert A. Harris 1996 reconstruction and restoration
Alfred J. Hitchcock Productions and Paramount Pictures

Hitchcock had written as early as 1927: 'when moving pictures are really artistic they will be created entirely by one man'.

The basis of *Vertigo* is a short novel by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac, *D'entre les morts (From among the Dead)*, first published in French in 1954. This pair always wrote in tandem, specialised in noir suspense thrillers and were at their most successful around this time. . . .Hitchcock had shown an interest in two of their previous novels, *Le Salaire de la peur (The Wages of Fear)* and *Les Diaboliques (The Fiends)*, but both were acquired by the French director Henri-Georges Clouzot, and the international success of the resulting films led some critics to bracket the two men together as experts in the

suspense genre.

Hitchcock continued to express an allegiance to non-dialogue aesthetics, insisting to Truffaut that ‘the silent cinema was the purest form of cinema’.

The French film-maker Chris Marker, one of the most acute of the commentators on *Vertigo*, has drawn attention to its artful pattern of ellipses: between Scottie’s first sight of Madeleine and his trailing of her, eliding the decision; between his rescue of her from the bay and her waking in his bed, eliding his undressing of her; between their embrace in the hotel room and their preparation for dinner, eliding the love scene.

from *Vertigo: The Making of a Hitchcock Classic*. Dan Aulich. Foreword Martin Scorsese. St. Martin’s Griffin NY 1998

...major critical reception at reissue in 1983—Janet Maslin in *NYTimes*: “If *Rear Window* seemed a pleasant surprise when it re-emerged last fall, *Vertigo* now seems shocking. For those who remember it as Hitchcock’s lost masterpiece, there are some surprisingly rough edges; for those to whom it’s unfamiliar, it may seem unbearably cruel. What is sure to startle anyone is the spectacle of the film, especially so emotionally powerful a film, whose every element is precisely geared to the larger whole. No director today exerts the kind of unrelenting control that Hitchcock did. And Hitchcock, for all his remarkable powers of reason, never shaped a film as fervently or perversely as this one.”

When the newly restored print of *Vertigo* was released in 1996, there was no question that this was Hitchcock’s preeminent film. Maslin, under the *The New York Times* headline HITCHCOCK AT HIS DEEPEST, called the film prescient, “the deepest darkest masterpiece of Hitchcock’s career. . . . The lure of death, the power of the past, the guilty complicity of a clean-cut hero, the near fetishistic use of symbol and color: these Hitchcock hallmarks are all mesmerizingly on view. (Here’s a film in which the heroine’s twisting hairdo signals the hero’s primal terror. And in which, as the restoration newly emphasized, there is ominous, alluring magic to a certain shade of green.)”

Hitchcock liked VistaVision—it provided a wide-screen ratio and much clearer images—but probably for reasons of cost *Vertigo*, along with all of Hitchcock’s other Paramount films, was reduced to standard 35mm for release.

Katz and Harris, then, were able to restore *Vertigo* not only to its original visual splendor but to a screen width that tripled the size of the image—lending the film’s images a breadth of view audiences had never before seen. This they achieved by printing from a 65mm negative to a 70mm negative, with limited loss of picture at the top and bottom of the image. The result was a *Vertigo* that represented not what audiences had originally seen but what Hitchcock had originally shot.

Harrison Engle’s sentiments. . . speak to the heart of the film: *Vertigo* is an expression of longing for what we can never have again, whether embodied in a person, a location, or an emotion. Those of us who are “healthy” do not wander the old places, looking for ghosts. But the film expresses a truth that may be dark but is unavoidable: Health falters, time destroys as well as

heals, and one day we find the living crowded by the dead. In that sense we all stand with Scottie in the tower.

from *Hitchcock*. Francois Truffaut. Simon & Schuster NY

F.T. It might be said that the texture of your films is made up of three elements: fear, sex, and death. These are not daytime preoccupations, like in films that deal with unemployment, racism, poverty, or the many pictures on everyday love conflicts between men and women. They are nighttime anxieties, therefore, metaphysical anxieties.

A.H. Well, isn’t the main thing that they be connected with life?

Hitchcock said:

“[Murnau’s] *The Last Laugh* was almost the perfect film. It told its story . . . entirely by the use of imagery and that had a tremendous influence on me. . . . My models were forever after the German filmmakers of 1924 and 1925. They were trying hard to express ideas in purely visual terms.”

“Cinema is the orchestration of shots.”

“Staircases are very photogenic.”

“I don’t believe in mystifying an audience. I believe in giving them all the information and then making them sweat.”

“I’m not interested in content. It disturbs me when people criticize my films because of their content. It’s like looking at a still life and saying ‘I wonder whether those apples are sweet or sour.’ Cinema is form.”

[About showing detail:] “If you free the spectator to choose, you’re making theater, not cinema.”

“I’d compare myself to an abstract painter. My favorite painter is Klee.”

“You know, people say that you can cut a film and make it go fast. I don’t believe that. Speed is preoccupation. In *The 39 Steps* there was no dead footage, so the audience’s absorption creates the impression of speed.”



“Some films are slices of life. Mine are slices of cake.”

“We’ve substituted the language of the camera for dialogue.”

“The more successful the villain, the more successful the

picture.”

“The story of *Notorious* is the old conflict between love and duty. Cary Grant’s job—and it’s a rather ironic situation—is to push Ingrid Bergman into Claude Rains’ bed. One can hardly

blame him for seeming bitter throughout the story, whereas Claude Rains is a rather appealing figure, both because his confidence is being betrayed and because his love for Ingrid Bergman is probably deeper than Cary Grant's. All of these elements of psychological drama have been woven into the spy story."

Hitchcock once said that he migrated to the US as a kind of cultural exchange, only nobody knows what was sent in return because, he said, "they are afraid to open it."

Ingrid Bergman, trying to make Hitchcock help her understand the motivation for the feelings of her character told Hitchcock: "I don't feel like that, I don't think I can give you that kind of emotion." Hitchcock replied: "Ingrid: fake it."

"Actors are cattle."

"I didn't say actors are cattle. What I said was, actors should be treated like cattle."

To crew complaints that Tallulah Bankhead's habit of not wearing underpants was creating camera angle problems in shooting *Lifeboat*: "I don't know if this is a matter for the costume department or the hairdresser."

"When an actor comes to me and wants to discuss his character, I say, 'It's in the script.' If he says, 'But what's my motivation?', I say, 'Your salary.'"

from *Who The Devil Made It Conversations with Legendary Film Directors*. Peter Bogdanovich (Ballantine Books NY 1997)

How did you do that shot in which Stewart kisses her in the hotel room and remembers the past in the stable?

I had the whole set built in a circle—the stable and the hotel room—a 360-degree set. And we put the camera in the middle and panned it right around. Then we put it on the flat screen. I put them on a turntable and just twisted the turntable in front of the screen and photographed it straight. The reason for it was that I didn't want to go to flashbacks again, but I wanted to show that visually.

Still to come in the Fall 2003 Buffalo Film Seminars:

- Oct 28 Jean-Luc Godard *Le Mépris/Contempt* 1963
- Nov 4 Martin Scorsese *Taxi Driver* 1976
- Nov 11 Peter Medak. *The Ruling Class* 1972
- Nov 18 Andrei Tarkovsky *Offret/The Sacrifice* 1986
- Nov 25 Jim Jarmusch *Dead Man* 1995
- Dec 2 Pedro Almodóvar *Habla con ella/Talk to Her* 2002

"Disney has the best casting. If he doesn't like an actor he just tears him up."

To a woman who complained that the shower scene in *Psycho* so frightened her daughter that the girl would no longer shower: "Then, Madam, I suggest you have her dry cleaned."

"Always make the audience suffer as much as possible"
"The length of a film should be directly related to the endurance of the human bladder"

"If I were to make another picture set in Australia I'd have a policeman hop into the pocket of a kangaroo and yell, Follow that car!"

"Drama is life with the dull bits left out."

"There are several differences between a football game and a revolution. For one thing, a football game usually lasts longer and the participants wear uniforms. Also there are more injuries at a football game."

"There is no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it."

"I understand the inventor of the bagpipes was inspired when he saw a man carrying an indignant, asthmatic pig under his arm. Unfortunately, the manmade sound never equaled the purity of the sound achieved by the pig."

Join us next week, Tuesday October 28, for Brigitte Bardot and Fritz Lang in

Jean-Luc Godard's classic *Le Mépris/Contempt*

...email Diane Christian: engdc@acsu.buffalo.edu

THE BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS ARE PRESENTED BY THE BUFFALO OFFICE OF FILM & ARTS CENTER & THE UNIVERSITY OF BUFFALO, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK