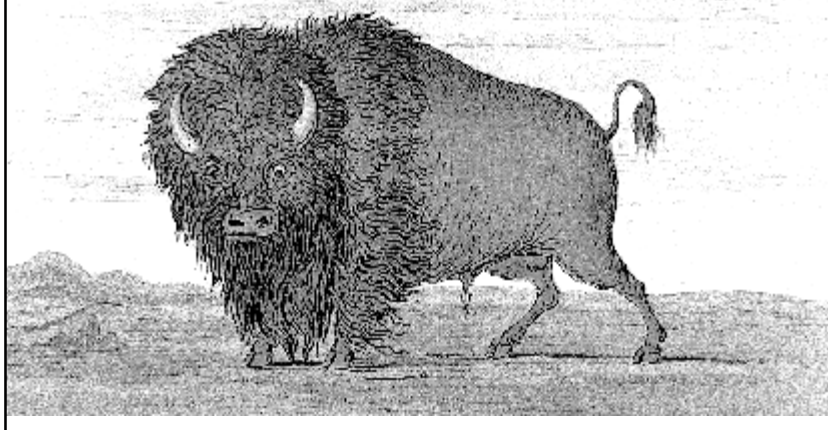


The Buffalo Film Seminars



Conversations about great films with Diane Christian & Bruce Jackson

SAM PECKINPAH (David Samuel Peckinpah, 21 February 1925, Fresno, California—28 December 1984, Inglewood, CA, stroke) directed *The Osterman Weekend* (1983), *Cross of Iron* (1977), *The Killer Elite* (1975), *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia* (1974), *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973), *The Getaway* (1972), *Junior Bonner* (1972), *Straw Dogs* (1971), *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* (1970), *Major Dundee* (1965), *Ride the High Country* (1962), and *The Deadly Companions* (1961). He trained by directing episodes in many tv series, among them "The Dick Powell Show" (1961), "Klondike" (1960), "The Westerner" (1960), "The Rifleman" (1958), "Trackdown" (1957), "Zane Grey Theater" (1956), "Broken Arrow" (1956), and "Gunsmoke" (1955). He played Charlie, the Meter Reader, in the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956).

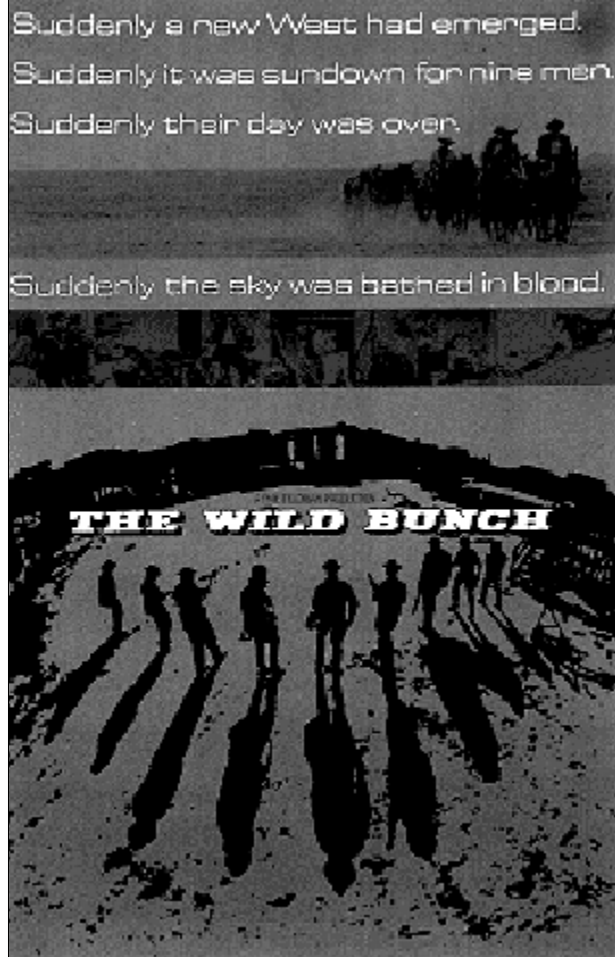


WILLIAM HOLDEN (William Franklin Beedle Jr., 17 April 1918, O'Fallon, Illinois—16 November 1981, Santa Monica, California, injuries from a fall) last appeared in *S.O.B.* (1981). His first two films were minor parts in *Prison Farm* (1938) and *Million Dollar Legs* (1939). His third screen appearance in *Golden Boy* (1939) made him a star. He would do about 75 other films, many of them memorable and most of the rest interesting. Some of them were: *Fedora* (1978), *Damien: Omen II* (1978), *Network* (1976), *The Blue Knight* (1973), *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960), *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), *Picnic* (1955), *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955), *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (1954), *The Country Girl* (1954), *Sabrina* (1954), *Executive Suite* (1954), *Stalag 17* (1953), *The Moon Is Blue* (1953), *Force of Arms* (1951), *Born Yesterday* (1950), *Sunset Blvd.* (1950), *Our Town* (1940). He was nominated for three Best Actor Oscars—*Network*, *Stalag 17* (won) and *Sunset Blvd.* (1950).

ERNEST BORGNINE (Ernes Effron Borgnino, 24 January 1917, Hamden, Connecticut) has been in hundreds of tv dramas and more than 150 films. Everybody hated him after he killed Frank Sinatra in *From Here to Eternity* (1953) but then everybody loved him for his Oscar-winning performance as Marty (1955). For the rest of his career he has alternated between guys you could like and guys you never could. Some of his other films: *Gattaca* (1997), *Convoy* (1978), *Emperor of the North Pole* (1973), *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972), *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), *McHale's Navy* (1964) and *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955).

ROBERT RYAN (11 November 1909, Chicago, Illinois—11 July 1973, New York, cancer) was equally adept at playing cool heroes and vicious creeps. Some of his other films: *The Iceman Cometh* (1973), *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), *The Professionals* (1966), *Battle of the Bulge* (1965), *The Longest Day* (1962),

Billy Budd (1962),
,
God's



THE WILD BUNCH 145 minutes
Directed by Sam Peckinpah
Story by Walon Green and Roy N. Sickner
Screenplay by Walon Green and Sam Peckinpah
Produced by Phil Feldman
Original music by Jerry Fielding
Cinematography by Lucien Ballard
Film Editing by Lou Lombardo
Special Effects by Bud Hulburd

William Holden....Pike Bishop
Ernest Borgnine....Dutch Engstrom
Robert Ryan....Deke Thornton
Edmond O'Brien....Freddie Sykes
Warren Oates....Lyle Gorch
Jaime Sánchez....Angel
Ben Johnson....Tector Gorch
Emilio Fernández....General Mapache
Strother Martin....Coffer
L.Q. Jones....T.C
Albert Dekker....Harrigan
Bo Hopkins....Crazy Lee
Dub Taylor....Wainscoat

National Film Preservation Board, USA, 1999,
National Film Registry

Little Acre (1958), Bad Day at Black Rock (1955), Flying Leathernecks (1951), I Married a Communist (1949), Marine Raiders (1944), and Golden Gloves (1939).

EDMOND O'BRIEN (10 September 1915, New York—9 May 1985, Inglewood, California, Alzheimer's disease) should get the peridentalists' worst-screen-teeth of the year award for his performance in this film. Usually he looked better. He starred in one of the great films noirs, D.O.A. (1950) and won a best-supporting actor Oscar for *The Barefoot Contessa* (1954). Some of his other films are *Seven Days in May* (1964), *The Longest Day* (1962), *Birdman of Alcatraz* (1962), *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), *White Heat* (1949), and *The Killers* (1946). His most improbable role was Casca in *Julius Caesar* (1953).

EMILIO FERNÁNDEZ (26 March 1903 Hondo, Coahuila, Mexico—6 August 1986, Mexico City) acted in about 75 Mexican and American films between 1928 and 1986, including two others by Peckinpah, *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia* and *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*. But his work as the director of 43 films is more important. According to IMDB, "Emilio Romo was the child of an Indian mother and a Spanish father. This is the reason for his nickname 'El Indio'. He gave up studying in order to participate in the Mexican revolution and was therefore condemned to 20 years of prison but escaped to the United States. At the beginning of the thirties he came back to Mexico in order to work as an actor and later also as director. With *Maria Candelaria* (1944) he won the Festival of Cannes and with *La Perla* (1945) the festival in Venice. At the end of the forties he was the most prestigious director of Latin America but the lack of money for film productions in his country made his productions decline in quality."

WARREN OATES (5 July 1928, Depoy, Kentucky—3 April 1982, Los Angeles, heart attack). Hal Erickson, *All Movie Guide*: "Lanky, laconic actor Warren Oates made his first stage appearance in a student play at the University of Louisville. Moving to New York in 1954, Oates took a variety of jobs to sustain himself, including a "stunt tester" for the TV audience-participation series *Beat the Clock* (one of Oates' predecessors in this endeavor was James Dean). He worked in live New York-based TV dramas before moving to Hollywood in 1957, where thanks to such Western TV series as *Have Gun Will Travel*, he established himself as a brooding villain. One of his rare opportunities to exhibit anything other than menace was his semicomical supporting role on the 1962 Jack Lord TV weekly *Stoney Burke*. One of director Sam Peckinpah's favorite actors, Oates was well served with meaty roles in such Peckinpah films as *Ride the High Country* (1962), *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950), *Strother Martin* (26 March 1919, Kokomo, Indiana—1 August 1980, Thousand Oaks, California, heart attack) appeared in scores of TV westerns and dramas before becoming one of Hollywood's best known character actors. He's probably best remembered as the warden who told Paul Newman that they had a "failure to communicate" in *Cool Hand Luke* (1967). Some of his other 60 movies: *Hotwire* (1980), *The Champ* (1979), *Cheech and Chong's Up in Smoke* (1978), *Rooster Cogburn* (1975), *Fools' Parade* (1971), *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* (1970), *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), *True Grit* (1969), *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), and *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950).

STROTHER MARTIN (26 March 1919, Kokomo, Indiana—1 August 1980, Thousand Oaks, California, heart attack) appeared in scores of TV westerns and dramas before becoming one of Hollywood's best known character actors. He's probably best remembered as the warden who told Paul Newman that they had a "failure to communicate" in *Cool Hand Luke* (1967). Some of his other 60 movies: *Hotwire* (1980), *The Champ* (1979), *Cheech and Chong's Up in Smoke* (1978), *Rooster Cogburn* (1975), *Fools' Parade* (1971), *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* (1970), *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), *True Grit* (1969), *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), and *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950).

LUCIEN BALLA R (6 May 1908, Miami, Oklahoma—1 October 1988, Rancho Mirage, California, road accident) shot more than 120 theatrical and made-for-TV films in a career that ran from 1930 through 1985. He did four other films with Peckinpah: *The Getaway* (1972), *Junior Bonner* (1972), *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* (1970), and *Ride the High Country* (1962).

[Referring to *The Wild Bunch* last battle] Richard Gentner and Diane Birdsall described this long orgy of killing as "the

Country (1962), *Major Dundee* (1965), and, best of all, *The Wild Bunch* (1969). With his remarkable performance as an ageing hot rod in 1971's *Two-Lane Blacktop*, Oates began a fruitful association with director Monte Hellman, who provided Oates with his best-ever film assignments in *Cockfighter* (1974) and *China 9 Liberty 37* (1982). Shortly after completing work on *Blue Thunder* (1982), Warren Oates' long-overdue rising stardom came to a tragic halt as a result of a sudden, fatal heart attack."

BEN JOHNSON (13 June 1918, Shidler, Oklahoma—8 April 1996, Mesa, Arizona, USA, apparent heart attack). IMDB bio: "Born in Oklahoma, Ben Johnson was a ranch hand and rodeo performer when, in 1940, Howard Hughes hired him to take a load of horses to California. He decided to stick around (the pay was good), and for some years was a stunt man, horse wrangler, and double for such stars as John Wayne, Gary Cooper and James Stewart. His break came when John Ford noticed him and gave him a part in an upcoming film, and eventually a star part in *Wagon Master* (1950). He left Hollywood in 1953 to return to rodeo, where he won a world roping championship, but at the end of the year he had barely cleared expenses. The movies paid better, and were less risky, so he returned to the west coast and a career that saw him in over 300 movies." Leonard Maltin: "Former rodeo star Johnson broke into the movie business in 1940, first as a horse wrangler and later as a double for cowboy star Wild Bill Elliott. After years of stuntwork, he was 'discovered' by director John Ford, who may have seen another John Wayne in the tall, good-looking, slow-drawling Oklahoman. Johnson eased into acting with supporting roles in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, *Mighty Joe Young* (both 1949), and *Rio Grande* (1950), and Ford starred him with Harry Carey, Jr., in *Wagon Master* (1950), but the likable Johnson just didn't seem to be star material. He returned to character parts, mostly in Westerns (including *Shane*, *One-Eyed Jacks* and *Hang 'em High* and matured into a fine, if limited, actor. (He never forsook his roots; in 1953 he was the World's Champion Steer Roper.) He was a favorite of director Sam Peckinpah, and appeared in his *Major Dundee* (1965), *The Wild Bunch* (1969), *Junior Bonner* and *The Getaway* (both 1972). Johnson's career took a major leap forward when he won an Oscar for his performance as Sam the Lion, the theater owner in *The Last Picture Show* (1971). He subsequently appeared in *Dillinger* (1973, as Melvin Purvis), *The Sugarland Express* (1974), *Bite the Bullet* (1975), *Breakheart Pass* (1976), *The Town That Dreaded Sundown* (1977), *The Swarm* (1978), *Tex* (1982), *Red Dawn* (1984), *My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys* (1991), and *Radio Flyer* (1992), among others."

(1962), and *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950).

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unparalleled montage event of cinema history. It is both 'son of *Potemkin*' and light years beyond it. It is the most exhausting

reel of film ever created—not merely a cluster of quick cuts. . . but a cascading avalanche of comprehension. The destruction of Mapache’s stronghold (and, of course, the Bunch along with it) is as inevitable as it is exhilarating.”

. . . The film ends with a shot of the Bunch laughing, culled from an earlier sequence. “By ending with these killers as they laugh, behaving as everyone does,” Peckinpah said, “I wanted to remind the audience that they were just people like themselves.”

Cut from 148 to 135 minutes, *The Wild Bunch* was previewed in June 1969 and released the same month. Its realistic depiction of violence, “the way blood spurts practically across a room, provoked an outburst of almost hysterical vituperation from critics, journalists, and other moralists. . . Peckinpah maintained that he did not like violence: “My idea was that it would have a cathartic effect.” Asked why, if he wanted to oppose violence, he had not made a film about the Vietnam war, the director said: “The Western is a universal frame within which it is possible to comment on today.”

Coursodon (in his *American Directors*, V. II) points out that

from *Second Sight: Notes on Some Movies 1965-1970*. Richard Schickel. Simon & Schuster NY 1972 “The Wild Bunch”

The Wild Bunch is the first masterpiece in the new tradition of what should probably be called “the dirty western.”

The traditional—or “clean” western, is, as a rule, no more firmly located in time than a dream is. Indeed, the western has been understood as the dream work of the American collective unconscious, referring us endlessly to a lost Eden that we probably never truly inhabited. . . .

It seems to me that the dirty western has throughout the sixties been groping about in our violent past, unconsciously searching for some historically true objective correlative that would help illuminate our present sense of desperate psychological dislocation.

from Peckinpah A Portrait in Montage. Garner Simmons, UT Press, Austin, 1982

[Peckinpah and Lucien Ballard screened as much Mexican Revolution footage c. 1913 as they could find and attempted to duplicate it.]

This concept of cutting together film shot at a variety of speeds ranging from normal to extreme slow motion is a key element in the power of violence in *The Wild Bunch* as well as in subsequent Peckinpah films. Slow motion alone merely elongates time. However, by placing shots of different speeds in juxtaposition as the moment of violence is revealed, an internal tension is created within that sequence of shots. This tension has become the distinctive trademark of Peckinpah’s screen violence.

“I had my ass chewed on every shot in *Wild Bunch!*” Strother Martin remembered with a smile. “But don’t get the wrong idea, I have more respect for Sam than almost anybody else in the world. He was keeping me in this frenetic state for a purpose: he wanted me to portray this psychotic character as if I were on the verge of a nervous breakdown, not that that’s any great struggle. But Sam is like a dirty psychiatrist—he gets inside your head and probes around with a scalpel. I don’t think I could take six pictures a year with Sam Peckinpah! There were times when I wasn’t sure I could even take one! But when I saw the final product, somehow it was all worthwhile. . . . Sam is hell to live with on a picture because he burns with a white-hot fire when he works, and there is no lethargy on a Sam Peckinpah set. In that way, he’s like a Ford or a Hathaway.

[Editor Lombardo] “When we finished, the picture was under two and a half hours with an intermission. There were 3,642 individual cuts in the film—more than any other color film ever made. I had remembered I think it was Hitchcock saying

The Wild Bunch continues Peckinpah’s refutation of the Western’s “moral Manichaeism,” driving home “the by then familiar point that there is no such thing as Good or Evil, only different forms and degrees of evil and different levels of awareness of this evil.”

It is, as McKinney says, “at the very least a landmark Western,” and there are those who think it the greatest of all Westerns.

As J.-P. Coursodon says, Sam Peckinpah is “undoubtedly the most controversial American director since Orson Welles.” Dismissed by some as a failed prodigy and/or a fascist, he is regarded by others as a major artist who “reinvented the shape of the cinema.” Robert Wood calls him the heir of John Ford, his values, like Ford’s “embodied in the myth of the Old West, with its emphasis on manhood and independence. . . but he follows through the implications of such a commitment (clung to in the context of contemporary America) with a ruthlessness of which Ford (ultimately a more complex artist) was incapable.”

one time that if you wanted to make a picture really exciting, you needed a lot of cuts. An average picture will have no more than, say, 600 cuts. So on that basis, *Wild Bunch* was the most exciting picture ever made.”

Speaking before Paul Seydor successfully arranged the reinsertion of the flashbacks, Lombardo praised their use and lamented their absence in the American print: “What really made *Wild Bunch* an incredible picture was the subliminals—the flashbacks that gave these really tough mothers a human dimension. They’re virtually all cut out of the American print, but they were beautiful. . . .

The entire subliminal was handled with straight cuts, which really made it unique for the time. Then Warners got cold feet because it had never been done that way before and they insisted on using oil dissolves to let everybody and his grandmother know we were going into the past. It was really a shame because it was really effective the first way. I wish I had a nickel for every time I’ve seen that straight-cut technique used since then to deal with both flashback and flashforward. But it was something new and daring, and they wouldn’t take a chance.”

[Jerry Fielding who scored it] “Now Sam’s ideas on how to score *The Wild Bunch* were all wrong. Sam wanted to do it with two Mexican guitar players—very authentic. Well, you really can’t do that. You see, realism on film is not quite realism. You can’t spread the theater full of horseshit so that everybody can smell the horses. In order for the picture to look ‘real’ it has to be made into a movie. Sam was very stringent about one thing: the music had to be authentically Mexican, and that it was. It was also extremely ‘schmaltzy,’ but the picture was so violent that I went heavily the other way. I played it like a love story between two men. The only chase we do in the film is the train robbery, really. All the rest is full

of darkness and sadness. It's full of melancholy. The only bit of real fun is in the wine cellar with Ben Johnson and Warren Oates.

[Stanley Kaufman in *The New Republic*] Peckinpah is such a gifted director that I don't see how one can keep from using the word "beautiful" about his work. [There is] a kinetic beauty in the very violence that his film lives and revels in. . . . The violence *is* the film.

During a foray into Hollywood on business in the spring of 1980 Peckinpah had learned of a screening of *The Wild Bunch*

for a class on Western film at the University of Southern California and was persuaded to attend. Warren Oates, who also happened to be in town at the time, came to the screening as well. The film was well received and afterward the director parried a number of questions with offhand humor and self-deprecating asides.

At last, a student was prompted to ask the director what was the most important thing to Sam Peckinpah. Peckinpah stared at the young man for a long moment.

"Making films," he said at last. "Working with people like Warren [Oates] and Strother [Martin]. That's everything. Nothing else matters."

I was armed to the teeth with a pitiful little Smith Wesson's seven-shooter, which carried a ball like a homopathic pill, and it took the whole seven to make a dose for an adult. But I thought it was grand. It appeared to me to be a dangerous weapon. It only had one fault—you could not hit anything with it. One of our "conductors" practiced awhile on a cow with it, and as long as she stood still and behaved herself she was safe; but as soon as she went to moving about, and he got to shooting at other things, she came to grief. The Secretary had a small-sized Colt's revolver strapped around him for protection against the Indians, and to guard against accidents he carried it uncapped. Mr. George Bemis was dismally formidable. George Bemis was our fellow-traveler. We had never seen him before. He wore in his belt an old original "Allen" revolver, such as irreverent people called a "pepper-box." Simply drawing the trigger back, cocked and fired the pistol. As the trigger came back, the hammer would begin to rise and the barrel to turn over, and presently down would drop the hammer, and away would speed the ball. To aim along the turning barrel and hit the thing aimed at was a feat which was probably never done with an "Allen" in the world. But George's was a reliable weapon, nevertheless, because, as one of the stage-drivers afterward said, "If she didn't get what she went after, she would fetch something else." And so she did. She went after a deuce of spades nailed against a tree, once, and fetched a mule standing about thirty yards to the left of it. Bemis did not want the mule; but the owner came out with a double-barreled shotgun and persuaded him to buy it, anyhow. It was a cheerful weapon—the "Allen." Sometimes all its six barrels would go off at once, and then there was no safe place in all the region round about, but behind it.

Mark Twain, *Roughing It*, 1872

Screening notes...

BFS

Just two more films in the Buffalo Film Seminars before we go on sabbatical until the last Tuesday in August:

November 26 François Truffaut, **Day for Night**, 1973

Truffaut was one of the founders of the French New Wave, and this film is his love-poem to the movies. Jacqueline Bisset, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Jean-Pierre Léaud and Truffaut himself star. Not only is it a good story, but you get to find out how they get the snow to do exactly what it's supposed to do or how they do all that filming in the dark of night.

December 3 Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones, **Monty Python and the Holy Grail**, 1975

If you know the Pythons, then no words are necessary here; if you don't, words will not suffice. I can tell you this: in no other film will you learn all you need to know about The Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch, see a cow used as a defensive woman, or see a peasant who a witch turned into a newt but who got better.

Diane's doing it alone tomorrow night

Wednesday, November 20, at the Amherst Theater, 7:30 p.m., Diane Christian will introduce a special screening of **A Matter of Life and Death** (U.S. release title *Stairway to Heaven*), 1946, the Powell-Pressburger 'subversive masterpiece,' starring David Niven and Kim Hunter.

UB's International Education Week Film Festival

Screenings at the UT Student Union are free, the ones at Market Arcade will be regular price (\$5.00 for students and seniors, \$7.00 regular folks. \$5.00 before 6 p.m. on Sunday).

PIÈCES d'IDENTITÉ (I.D.) - Congo, 1998. Mistaken identities and zany occurrences provide the spark in this part comedy, drama, thriller, romance. Mweze Ngangure's award-winner examines modern Europe through the eyes of a traditional African king who journeys from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Brussels in search of his daughter with whom he has lost contact. 11/18 Monday, Student Union Theater (UB North Campus). 3:00 pm. 11/24 Sunday, Market Arcade Film & Arts Center. 2:00 & 7:00 pm

SHOWER—China, 1999 - "Shower" examines the current state of Chinese culture where traditions are being abandoned by the modern world. A young wealthy businessman's icy attitude toward his working-class background begins to thaw as he is forced to reconnect with his elderly father and mentally challenged brother, who together run a public

bathroom. 11/22 Friday, Student Union Theater (UB North Campus). 3:00 pm. 11/23 Saturday, Market Arcade Film & Arts Center. 8:00 pm

JOINT SECURITY AREA—Korea, 2000. ...an intelligent murder mystery set at the only meeting point between North and South Korea, whose tragic solution reveals the war zone's tension between hate and humanity.”- Joshua Tanzer, OffOffOff.com 11/19 Tuesday, Student Union Theater (UB North Campus). 5:00 pm. 11/22 Friday, Market Arcade Film & Arts Center. 8:00 pm

Things to do at the Market Arcade Tuesday nights this spring while we're on sabbatical

Watch great movies! Buff State's Terry McDonald will host "Oscar through the Decades." He'll have good handouts, good talk, great movies. We'll send the schedule to the BFS email list and, if it's ready, have it in the handout for *Holy Grail*.

Check out the other films, past films, and all the goldenrod handouts at <http://buffalofilmseminars.com>.

Write Diane at engdc@acsu.buffalo.edu. Write Bruce at bjackson@buffalo.edu.

Check out Buffalo's only free and independent news magazine at <http://buffaloreport.com>.