
William Friedkin (29 August 1939, Chicago) began his career at 16 in the mailroom of WGN-TV in Chicago. Within months was a studio floor manager, in less than a year was directing live broadcasts. He was fired by several TV stations in Chicago area but in 8 years as TV director he made around 2,000 programs–local live broadcasts, educational programs, network dramas and musical shows. Friedkin made three interesting films – The French Connection 1971 (for which he won a Best Director Oscar), The Exorcist 1973 (for which he was nominated for Best Director), and a grubby T-men vs attractive Counterfeiter movie starring Willem Dafoe as the counterfeiter and that master of retarded motion William L. Peterson as the T-man, To Live and Die in LA 1985. (Not quite everybody hated it: the film won the audience award at the 1986 Cognac Festival du Film Policier.) He also directed several dogs: the much-hyped and deservedly panned Jade 1995, Cruising 1980 (for which he won the 1980 Razzie award for Worst Director), and an unnecessary and unsuccessful remake of Clouzot’s great La Salaire de la peur (Wages of Fear) 1953, Sorcerer 1977, which starred Roy Scheider. (John Huston used to say he thought it silly to try to remake a great film because unless you got really lucky, you had nowhere to go but down. In Sorcerer, Friedkin did n’t get lucky.) Friedkin’s most memorable work since the early 70s has been on TV, notably in HBO’s “Tales from the Crypt” and “The Twilight Zone.” Friedkin has consistently married within the industry: actress Jeanne Moreau (1977-79), actress Lesley-Anne Down (1982-85), TV anchorwoman Kelly Lange (1987-1990), Paramount executive Sherry Lansing.

Ernest Tidyman (1 January 1928, Cleveland, Ohio – 14 July 1984 complications from a perforated ulcer) won an Academy Award for his French Connection script. He was one of the few white people to win a NAACP Image Award (for his Shaft novels) He also wrote the script for Clint Eastwood’s ghostly High Plains Drifter 1972 and several made-for-tv films.


Fernando Rey (Fernando Casado Arambillet, 20 September 1917, La Coruña, Spain – 9 March 1994, Madrid, Spain, cancer) appeared in nearly 250 films,
ROY SCHEIDER (10 November 1932, Orange, New Jersey) appeared in several forgettable films then had two terrific parts in 1970: The French Connection (for which he received a best supporting actor Oscar nomination) and Klute. He has acted regularly in films ever since, though in the last decade he is probably better known for his role as Captain Nathan Bridger in Steven Spielberg’s tv series, “SeaQuest DSV”. Some of his other films: Romeo Is Bleeding 1993, The Russia House 1990, All That Jazz 1979, Jaws 2 1978, Sorcerer 1977, Marathon Man 1976, Jaws 1975. He walked out of the role of Michael in The Deer Hunter (the role that made De Niro famous) because he did not believe that the character would travel around the world to find his friend.

BILL HICKMAN (1920 – 24 February 1986, Indio, California, cancer) does Hackman’s driving in this film, sometimes hitting 90 mph on Brooklyn streets, with Friedkin in the car operating the camera. He was the badguy driving the black Dodge Charger 440 Magnum in Bullitt 1968.

EDDIE EGAN (3 January 1930, New York, New York – 4 November 1995, Miami, Florida, (cancer), a tough New York cop nicknamed “Popeye” who played tough cops on several tv series and in several films. His exploits with SONNY GROSSO, particularly the 112-pound $32 million Fren ch Connection drug bust in 1962, inspired Robin Moore’s book and this film. Egan’s exploits provided the source material for another film, Badge 373 1973. During his 16 years on NYPD, Egan – whose real-life badge number was 373, who wore a porkpie hat and who carried his gun in an ankle holster – was credited with 8,741 arrests. He smoked unfiltered Camels.

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[Friedkin’s tv] output included several well-received documentary specials, of which the most notable was The People Versus Paul Crump, winner of the Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco Film Festival. A 16mm film about a man who had spent eleven years on Death Row in Cook County prison, it offered such convincing evidence of Crump’s rehabilitation that his death sentence was eventually commuted. WBKB-Tv, the Chicago station for which Friedkin had made the film, never used it, but was sufficiently impressed to set up a documentary unit with Friedkin in charge. Before long The People Versus Paul Crump came to the attention of the ABC-TV producer David Wolper, who hired Friedkin to make three more documentaries: The Thin Blue Line, about law enforcement; Mayhem on a Sunday Afternoon, a report on professional football; and The Bold Men, dealing with people who risk their lives for money, adventure or science.

He has said that as a filmmaker he is happiest researching a new idea or editing a fresh batch of footage; actual shooting seems to him a laborious, plodding process, and the final editing is often a source of anxiety and despair. “No matter what you hear,” Friedkin said once, “the projectionist has final cut always.” He has been known to replace a screen or projector lenses at theaters where his pictures are showing, and is a perfectionist about sound and light levels at which they are projected.... Pauline Kael quotes him as saying that “I'm not a thinker. . . .If it's a film by somebody instead of for somebody, I smell art.”

Join us next week, Tuesday April 10, for Sean Connery and Michael Cane in John Huston’s The Man Who Would Be King 1975
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