

Ann Arbor Film Judges Discuss Festival

Joe Fineman
Henri Chapier
Gerard Malanga
Andrew Lugg

1967

Editors' note: The following interview by FIFTH ESTATE film editor Joe Fineman took place at the recent Ann Arbor Film Festival. Participants in the interview were film judges Henri Chapier, critic for COMBAT magazine; Gerard Malanga, superstar; and Andrew Lugg, U of M Cinema Guild. The winners of the festival will be shown in late April by FNCC Lower DeRoy Aud. on the Wayne Campus.

ESTATE: Many people with whom I've spoken have not regarded this festival as an experimental film festival but a festival for young amateur film makers.

CHAPIER: I have exactly that opinion. At first I had the wrong impression because everything seemed so childish and immature. I also had the impression that no one should feel the obligation of film making unless he has something to say. Everybody feels obliged to film making like it was talking, eating or walking. Film should be more or less an attempt to express something original in a personal way. Here I had the impression that this was a childish game. Everyone went out with a camera and tried to do something. Tolerance is a beautiful quality but sometimes the audience should reject with violence work that is a really bad production.

MALANGA: This is the first festival at which I've ever been a judge so I really feel like a student. I found myself learning a lot.

LUGG: You don't expect to see 20 new authors a year and you don't expect to see 20 great new films a year. There were films however that were important. The film which Gerard and I liked, *A Clue To A New Direction*, quite clearly stands out. To me it seemed open ended as though a lot of things are going to come from this. It can be extended and extended while a lot of films are closed. This is perhaps the big difference between this year's festival and last. Last year there was much more abstract expression, now its being whittled out.

ESTATE: One wonders what possibly could have possessed some of these film makers to make what they would call art and what we would call something else.

MALANGA: Some of them were film workshop projects like from USC and UCLA and the rest were independently made. Andy Meyers film *A Clue To A New Direction* was inspired by the fact that he wanted to do a film of Prescott Townsend. Now he couldn't actually do the film with him without Rene Ricard, who is Prescott's nephew. Rene got Prescott to put up the money for the film and also got Joy Bang to star in the film.

You can see that there are many motives and inspirations for doing films. LAPIS was inspired by the fact that this film maker had this machine that he built that he knew would calculate for him beautiful images that he could put on film.

ESTATE: The other criticism most often uttered was that it seems as though these people never go to the movies. In other words they don't appear to have a knowledge of what has gone before.

CHAPIER: Well, I certainly agree with you. Most of them don't know what the means of cinema is at all. It's a very naive production of film making. It looks very scholastic sometimes. You know how to move the camera but it's too amateurish. Perhaps if film making were more difficult it would be better because it would force people to try to get the best of themselves. I don't think that a few shots of a Rolling Stones tune is enough to make a movie. They are hollow and very empty.

MALANGA: They probably haven't seen many films. They've seen BIRTH OF A NATION but they probably haven't seen very many of the other films which were made around that period.

LUGG: I tend to think it's important to see a lot of movies simply to know what to leave out. When you come right down to it most great film makers do have a background in some sort of medium.

MALANGA: For instance Pasolini was a poet before he was a film maker.

LUGG: We've talked about the influence of Warhol which is considerable. In an interview with Warhol he said he went to see a 4th or 5th rate film. But you see it's different when Warhol sees a D film and when most of us see a D film. He has a very different way of looking at the film. Warhol looks at such a film in a very open way whereas these other people see it in a critical way.

MALANGA: Andrew Mayer saw many films when he was a commercial artist without the faintest notion of making a movie.

LUGG: There's an attitude about that; you get a camera, you go out and shoot and it comes out wonderful. You can't. You have to think.

ESTATE: Would you care to comment on the films and their creators.

CHAPIER: I think there are two or three in these experiments of which we call the New York school. Then you have somebody called David Brooks, who had a real personal and poetical view of things. It's interesting because it moves you and gives you a sort of deep insight of his person that he is an artist. He is promising. On the other hand this is a local film maker who is a student here, Tom Berman. He made a film called THE BRIDGE. A very pretty exercise and at least that young student knows something about cinema. He has probably gone to a lot of movies. He knows what shooting means and he knows what editing means.

The problem is that he is young and you can't expect him to have many personal views of life. You can't expect these people to set in artistic terms an experience of which they can only have a literary view, but not a romantic or true one. What is a film? It is someone behind a camera. Behind the equipment there is an impulse. That is promising as far as the craftsmanship is concerned but it is very immature.

ESTATE: Many people understood this festival to be of an experimental nature whereas I don't believe I saw an awful lot of experimentation.

MALANGA: No there wasn't too much experimentation. There was enough that stood out however. Lapis was experimental.

LUGG: Meyer's film was experimental. The way its using a whole new experimental form. It's using what cinema's been about for a long time in a very different way.

MALANGA: Was it experimental?

LUGG: the textures he created I think were very experimental. When people talk about experimentation they talk about technical experimentation. What is new now is experimentation into a new narrative. It's the same thing that Warhol's doing. He doesn't use trick photography but an investigation into a new narrative form.

Sidebar

So who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?

ALFIE isn't.

Neither is GEORGY GIRL nor

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS.

The Studio Theatre's current box office champions have 17 Academy Award nominations between them, and we'll match them, nomination for nomination, against ALL Oscar contenders, including the big bad Woolf.

We believe A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS will beat out Virginia Woolf for the Oscar as Best Film of the Year, and that Michael Caine (ALFIE) and Lynn Redgrave (GEORGY GIRL) will defeat Burton-Taylor for the Best Actor and Actress awards.

You may not agree with us, but that's part of the fun in the annual Oscar-guessing game.

If you plan to watch the Academy Awards telecast April 10, you'll want to see the major contenders beforehand.

Make a note:

ALFIE at the Studio-8.

GEORGY GIRL at the Studio-North.

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS at the Studio New Center.

And, of course, if you haven't already, you really should see Virginia Woolf.

fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #27, April 1-15, 1967

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