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MOVIES

THE ULTIMATE INSIDER'S GUIDE

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Dead Man

1995, *Jim Jarmusch*

SCREENPLAY: Jim Jarmusch

CAST: Johnny Depp, Gary Farmer, Lance Henriksen, Michael Wincott, Mili Avital, Iggy Pop, Crispin Glover, Eugene Byrd, Gabriel Byrne, John Hurt, Alfred Molina, Robert Mitchum, Billy Bob Thornton, Jared Harris

U.S./GERMANY/JAPAN, B & W

A sadly overlooked film, stunningly photographed by Robby Müller, *Dead Man* is an inspired take on the Western tradition. With brilliant performances by Johnny Depp, Billy Bob Thornton, and Mili Avital.

ANJELICA HUSTON
Actor

Dodsworth

1936, *William Wyler*

SCREENPLAY: Sidney Howard; based on the novel by Sinclair Lewis

CAST: Walter Huston, Ruth Chatterton, Paul Lukas, Mary Astor, David Niven, Gregory Gaye, Maria Ouspenskaya, Odette Myrtil, Spring Byington, Harlan Briggs, John Payne

U.S., B & W

Despite an over-the-top performance by Ruth Chatterton, I've always felt that *Dodsworth* was one of the finest American movies. William Wyler's simplicity, Sidney Howard's language, and, above all, Walter Huston's and Mary Astor's performances result in one of the most mature and powerful movies in my memory. The glory and debasement that love can bring into one's life have never been explored so tellingly. In fact, because of our sentimentality about love, rarely do

we consider its destructive power. *Dodsworth* plunges into this world unhesitatingly with art and power and subtlety. In my view, a great film.

SIDNEY LUMET
Director

Funny Bones

1995, *Peter Chelsom*

SCREENPLAY: Peter Chelsom and Peter Flannery

CAST: Oliver Platt, Jerry Lewis, Lee Evans, Leslie Caron, Richard Griffiths, Oliver Reed, George Carl, Freddie Davies, Ian McNeice

U.K./U.S., B & W

You've never seen anything quite like this astonishing, completely unpredictable comedy about comedy. Its hero is a failed Vegas stand-up (Oliver Platt) living in the shadow of his famous funnyman father (Jerry Lewis). To learn the tricks of the trade, Platt goes back to his birthplace in Blackpool, where he discovers a brilliant but unbalanced physical clown (Lee Evans) and some dark secrets from the past. This synopsis makes director Peter Chelsom's 1995 movie sound straightforward, yet it is anything but—it veers from piracy at sea to Leslie Caron in a Cleopatra costume to some of the wildest vaudeville acts you'll ever see. Evans is a sight to behold: he does with his body what Robin Williams does with his brain. *Funny Bones* is a high-wire act from start to finish, and quite unclassifiable: its U.S. distributor, Disney, hadn't a clue what to do with it. But if ever a movie deserved a cult following, this one does.

DAVID ANSEN
Film Critic, Newsweek

Peter Hyams Double Bill

Busting

1974, Peter Hyams

SCREENPLAY: Peter Hyams

CAST: Elliot Gould, Robert Blake, Allen Garfield, Antonio Fargas, Michael Lerner, Sid Haig, Cornelia Sharpe
U.S.

Capricorn One

1978, Peter Hyams

SCREENPLAY: Peter Hyams

CAST: Elliot Gould, James Brolin, Brenda Vaccaro, Sam Waterston, O. J. Simpson, Hal Holbrook, Karen Black, Telly Savalas, David Huddleston, David Doyle, Lee Bryant, Denise Nicholas, Robert Walden
U.S.

I am a great admirer of *Capricorn One*, director Peter Hyams' 1978 conspiracy thriller about an aborted—and subsequently faked—NASA mission to Mars. So when I came across a VHS tape of Hyams' first film, *Busting*, in my video store five years ago, I rented it. At the time, I liked it very much, but I thought I should give it a second look before writing about it. I borrowed a 35 mm print of the film from United Artists and screened it at a friend's house in Beverly Hills for a group that included five directors, an actor, and a cinematographer. None had heard of *Busting* before, and everyone except me hated it. . . .

I tried to argue the merits of this film, but I was met with gentle incomprehension. No one felt strongly enough about it to fight me, nor was I able to win any converts. I may have to stand alone on *Busting*. *Capricorn One*, on the other hand, I will defend relentlessly. I recommend a Hyams double bill with *Busting* on the B-side. If you don't make it through the second picture, at least you will enjoy (in *Capricorn One*) Telly Savalas flying upside down in a crop duster as he is being chased by helicopters, James Brolin fighting, killing, and eating a rattlesnake, and the incomparable slow-motion finale with Brolin and Gould (again) running through a cemetery to a waiting Hal Holbrook and Brenda Vaccaro. Sam Waterston, Karen Black, and O. J. Simpson also make an appearance.

WES ANDERSON
Director

Living On Velvet

1935, Frank Borzage

SCREENPLAY: Jerry Wald and Julius J. Epstein

CAST: Kay Francis, Warren William, George Brent, Helen Lowell, Henry O'Neill, Russell Hicks, Maude Turner Gordon, Samuel S. Hinds, Edgar Kennedy
U.S., B & W

Frank Borzage was, at one time, one of the most famous directors in Hollywood. Today he's almost forgotten, his name known only to film lovers and scholars. Why? Probably because his pictures epitomize everything we find "old-fashioned" about the Hollywood of the '20s, '30s, and '40s: they're deeply romantic and firmly rooted in the belief that love conquers all. In most films of the period, that idea is a cliché, a device, or a pretext for character exploration (as in a Hawks picture). But in a Borzage movie, love really does conquer all, and it really does make the world go round. When Borzage shows two people in love—Charles Farrell and Janet Gaynor in *Seventh Heaven*, Gary Cooper and Helen Hayes in *A Farewell to Arms*, Spencer Tracy and Joan Crawford in *Mannequin*, Dane Clark and Gail Russell in *Moonrise*—you feel as if you've entered a sacred realm. He lets the action play out in lovers' time, and every little physical and emotional detail feels precious. Borzage's cinema reminds me of Renaissance painting: everything feels rounded, perfectly aligned—sanctified.

In the mid-'30s, Borzage made two films at Warner Brothers, both with Kay Francis and George Brent. The better of the two is *Living on Velvet* . . .

MARTIN SCORSESE
Director

INDEX OF CONTRIBUTORS

Contributors include notable figures in the film industry, including directors, producers, actors, and critics. This is a sampling of the 140 contributors included in this book

DAVID ANSEN is a senior editor at *Newsweek*, where he has been a movie critic since 1977. He has written television documentaries on Groucho Marx, Bette Davis, Greta Garbo, and Elizabeth Taylor.

JEANINE BASINGER is Corwin-Fuller Professor of Film Studies and American Studies at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, where she is also founder and curator of the Wesleyan Cinema Archives, chair of the Film Studies Program, and the 1996 winner of Wesleyan's Binswanger Prize for Excellence in Teaching.

CHARLES BURNETT's films include *Killer of Sheep*, *My Brother's Wedding*, *To Sleep with Anger*, *The Glass Shield*, *Nightjohn*, *The Wedding*, and *Finding Buck McHenry*. *Killer of Sheep* was inducted into the Library of Congress National Registry.

MICHAEL C. DONALDSON is president of the International Documentary Association, as well as an attorney with the Law Offices of Donaldson &

Hart specializing in independent film and theater.

JOHN GUARE is the Tony-, OBIE-, and New York Drama Critics Circle Award-winning playwright of such plays as *House of Blue Leaves*, *Six Degrees of Separation*, and *A Few Stout Individuals*. He also wrote the Oscar-nominated screenplay for Louis Malle's *Atlantic City*.

BARBARA KOPPLE, two-time Academy Award-winning producer/director, has made her mark by telling in-depth stories in both nonfiction and fiction films. Her films include *Wild Man Blues*, *Harlan County, U.S.A.*, *American Dream*, and *A Conversation with Gregory Peck, My Generation*.

SIMON SCHAMA is university professor of art history and history at Columbia University and art and culture critic for the *New Yorker*. His fifteen-part BBC/History Channel series on the history of Britain had an audience of three to four million in the UK, and his books—*Rough Crossings*; *The Power of Art*; *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*; *Landscape and Memory*; and *Rembrandt's Eyes*—have won awards on both sides of the Atlantic.

THE FILM FOUNDATION

Through partnerships with the nation's leading film archives—Academy Film Archive, George Eastman House, Library of Congress, Museum of Modern Art, and UCLA Film & Television Archive—The Film Foundation has funded the preservation and restoration of over 500 films that might have otherwise been lost. The Film Foundation also supports the National Film Preservation Foundation and their grant program to over 100 regional archives, libraries and historical societies. The titles saved by The Film Foundation include a broad range of films including studio and independent features, avant-garde works, documentaries, newsreels, home movies, and films from the silent era.

The organization was founded in 1990 by Martin Scorsese and a distinguished group of fellow filmmakers—Woody Allen, Robert Altman, Francis Ford Coppola, Clint Eastwood, Stanley Kubrick, George Lucas, Sydney Pollack, Robert Redford, and Steven Spielberg. In 2006, they were joined on the foundation's board of directors by Paul Thomas Anderson, Wes Anderson, Curtis Hanson, Peter Jackson, Ang Lee, and Alexander Payne. The Film Foundation is aligned with the Directors Guild of America.

For more information, please visit www.film-foundation.org

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