

A Little Solitaire John Frankenheimer And American Film Author Murray Pomerance Published On August 2011

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'Grand Prix' provides evidence of Hollywood claiming the practice and privilege of the French beaux arts for its own.By the second half of the twentieth century, American film had not only usurped the spectacle and popularity of the

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Think about some commercially successful film masterpieces--The Manchurian Candidate. Seven Days in May. Seconds. Then consider some lesser known, yet equally compelling cinematic achievements--The Fixer. The Gypsy Moths. Path to War. These triumphs are the work of the best known and most highly regarded Hollywood director to emerge from live TV drama in the 1950s--five-time Emmy-award-winner John Frankenheimer. Although Frankenheimer was a pioneer in the genre of political thrillers who embraced the antimodernist critique of contemporary society, some of his later films did not receive the attention they deserved. Many claimed that at a midpoint in his career he had lost his touch. World-renowned film scholars put this myth to rest in A Little Solitaire, which offers the only multidisciplinary critical account of Frankenheimer's oeuvre. Especially emphasized is his deep and passionate engagement with national politics and the irrepressible need of human beings to assert their rights and individuality in the face of organizations that would reduce them to silence and anonymity.

The Eyes Have It explores those rarified screen moments when viewers are confronted by sights that seem at once impossible and present, artificial and stimulating, illusory and definitive. Beginning with a penetrating study of five cornfield sequences—including The Wizard of Oz, Arizona Dream, and Signs—Murray Pomerance journeys through a vast array of cinematic moments, technical methods, and laborious collaborations from the 1930s to the 2000s to show how the viewer's experience of "reality" is put in context, challenged, and willfully engaged. Four meditations deal with "reality effects" from different philosophical and technical angles. "Vivid Rivals" assesses active participation and critical judgment in seeing effects with such works as Defiance, Cloverfield, Knowing, Thelma & Louise, and more. "The Two of Us" considers double placement and doubled experience with such films as The Prestige, Niagara, and A Stolen Life. "Being There" discusses cinematic performance and the problems of believability, highlighting such films as Gran Torino, The Manchurian Candidate, In Harm's Way, and other films. "Fairy Land" explores the art of scenic backing, focusing on the fictional world of Brigadoon, which borrows from both hard-edged realism and evocative landscape painting.

The various essays in this volume, all written by prominent experts in the field, offer critical discussions of every feature film Cukor directed and include a rich trove of valuable information about their production histories.

There are hundreds of biographies of filmstars and dozens of scholarly works on acting in general. But what about the ephemeral yet indelible moments when, for a brief scene or even just a single shot, an actor's performance triggers a visceral response in the viewer? Moment of Action delves into the mysteries of screen performance, revealing both the acting techniques and the technical apparatuses that coalesce in an instant of cinematic alchemy to create movie gold. Considering a range of acting styles while examining films as varied as Bringing Up Baby, Psycho, The Red Shoes, Godzilla, and The Bourne Identity, Murray Pomerance traces the common dynamics that work to structure the complex relationship between the act of cinematic performance and its eventual perception. Mining the spaces where subjective and objective analyses merge, Pomerance offers both a deeply personal account of film viewership and a detailed examination of the intuitive gestures, orchestrated movements, and backstage maneuvers that go into creating those phenomenal moments onscreen. Moment of Action takes us on an innovative exploration of the nexus at which the actor's keen skills spark and kindle the audience's receptive energies.

In the early days of filmmaking, before many of Hollywood's elaborate sets and soundstages had been built, it was common for movies to be shot on location. Decades later, Hollywood filmmakers rediscovered the practice of using real locations and documentary footage in their narrative features. Why did this happen? What caused this sudden change? Renowned film scholar R. Barton Palmer answers this question in Shot on Location by exploring the historical, ideological, economic, and technological developments that led Hollywood to head back outside in order to capture footage of real places. His groundbreaking research reveals that wartime newsreels had a massive influence on postwar Hollywood film, although there are key distinctions to be made between these movies and their closest contemporaries, Italian neorealist films. Considering how these practices were used in everything from war movies like Twelve O'Clock High to westerns like The Searchers, Palmer explores how the blurring of the formal boundaries between cinematic journalism and fiction lent a "reality effect" to otherwise implausible stories. Shot on Location describes how the period's greatest directors, from Alfred Hitchcock to Billy Wilder, increasingly moved beyond the confines of the studio. At the same time, the book acknowledges the collaborative nature of moviemaking, identifying key roles that screenwriters, art designers, location scouts, and editors played in incorporating actual geographical locales and social milieus within a fictional framework. Palmer thus offers a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at how Hollywood transformed the way we view real spaces.

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The classic thriller about a hostile foreign power infiltrating American politics: "Brilliant . . . wild and exhilarating." —The New Yorker A war hero and the recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, Sgt. Raymond Shaw is keeping a deadly secret—even from himself. During his time as a prisoner of war in North Korea, he was brainwashed by his Communist captors and transformed into a deadly weapon—a sleeper assassin, programmed to kill without question or mercy at his captors' signal. Now he's been returned to the United States with a covert mission: to kill a candidate running for US president. . . . This "shocking, tense" and sharply satirical novel has become a modern classic, and was the basis for two film adaptations (San Francisco Chronicle). "Crammed with suspense." —Chicago Tribune "Condon is wickedly skillful." —Time

In John Frankenheimer: Interviews, Essays, and Profiles, Stephen B. Armstrong has collected the most interesting and insightful articles and features published on this underrated director. In this volume, the director and others look back on a career that included such films as Seven Days in May, The Train, Grand Prix, The Iceman Cometh, Black Sunday, and Ronin. The first collection of its kind, this book enables those who value the director s work to develop a better understanding of the man through his own words and the words of others."

"It may be the most sophisticated political thriller ever made in Hollywood," film critic Pauline Kael wrote of John Frankenheimer's terrifying 1962 political thriller about an American serviceman brainwashed in Korea and made into an assassin. Sophisticated to be sure, it's also a headlong fall through the looking-glass of American politics and the most deeply prophetic film of the second half of the American century. As Greil Marcus reconstructs the drama, The Manchurian Candidate is a movie in which the director and actors, including Laurence Harvey, Frank Sinatra and Angela Lansbury in an Academy Award-nominated performance, were suddenly capable of anything, beyond any expectations. This edition includes a new foreword highlighting the movie's terrifying contemporary relevance in the age of Trump and Russian interference in the US Presidential election.

George Cukor is one of the studio era's most famous and admired directors, with many of the American cinema's most beloved classics to his credit, including The Women, Gaslight, Adam's Rib, A Star is Born, and My Fair Lady to his credit. Not himself a scriptwriter, he was particularly adept at choosing which properties to adapt and then managing the adaptation process with verve and effectiveness. What makes for a good adapter, for a talented master of ceremonies who knows where to put everything and everybody (including the camera)? Who knows how to make a property his own even while enhancing the value it has as belonging to someone else? The essays in this volume provide a series of complementary answers to those questions. Though many of his films are celebrated, Cukor has hitherto not received appropriate critical attention. Cukor's interest in the various forms of indoor cinema lacked the generic focus of Ford's westerns and Hitchcock's thrillers. His style was theatricality writ large, a successful transference to the screen of what he had learned from his successful Broadway career, including the outsized, often flamboyant handling of emotionality. Yet Cukor was also a man of the cinema, fascinated by the ever-developing potentials of his adopted medium, as shown by the more than fifty films he directed in a career that endured from the early sound era into the 1970s.