‘It should not be denied that being footloose has always exhilarated us. It is associated in our minds with escape from history and oppression and law and irksome obligations. Absolute freedom. And the road has always led west.’

Christopher McCandless – Into the Wild
Rob Beames follows a real life trail that leads all the way back to the site of one of cinema’s most memorable escapes.

Shawshank Convention

**The Shawshank Redemption** is a visceral, sometimes disturbing Stephen King adaptation about man’s inhumanity to man and the perseverance of the human spirit. Frank Darabont’s movie has emerged so far from under the shadow of its initially lukewarm reception in 1994 that it now ranks in almost unanimous critical and popular sunshine, regularly topping “best film of all-time” polls. It’s, at times, a harrowing watch and one wouldn’t imagine it’d be a boon to tourism in Mansfield, Ohio, where much of it was filmed. But the very opposite is true.

“The Shawshank Trail” is listed between “Sports & Recreation” and “Shopping” on the “What to Do” section of the county’s official tourism website, which in August and September of this year is gearing up to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the shoot. In fact, amongst the location maps, photos and a series of dedicated podcasts, there’s even an impassioned video plea from actor Bob Gunton – who memorably portrayed the corrupt prison warden – inviting visitors to this year’s big event.

But what can Shawshank’s legion of dedicated super-fans expect to see after schlepping their way to this remote part of Ohio? Well, there are no less than 14 sites of significance along the suggested driving route. These include the park bench where Brooks (James Whitmore) feeds pigeons, the Renaissance Theatre – “a historic 1928 movie palace” – where the film’s premiere was held – “Sit in the very same seats” – and, of course, the Ohio State Reformatory which served as the dreaded prison.

www.thebigpicturemagazine.com Summer 2013
Silent Runnings

NEIL MITCHELL and DEAN BRANDUM turn a searchlight on a varied selection of movies that all feature escapes—physical, emotional and spiritual—as their driving narrative force.

KANAL (1957)
Dir: Andrej Wajda

The middle film in Polish director Andrzej Wajda’s War Trilogy, which began with A Generation (1954) and was completed by Ashes and Diamonds (1958), is a symbolic representation of Hell on Earth. Set during the final days of the Warsaw Uprising, Kanal sees its central protagonists, a ravaged company of Home Army resistance fighters, attempt to escape from the Nazis via the city’s sewer system. Their doomed venture, signaled as such by a narrator at the film’s outset, descends into a Dantean vision of self-sacrifice, madness and death. Far from aiding their escape, the labyrinthine sewer system leads the fighters to dead ends, mental disorientation, booby trapped exits and execution. The first film to be made about the Warsaw Uprising, Kanal is an enduring, emotionally exhausting reminder of the shattering, inhumane experiences suffered during wartime. That Kanal was based on real events makes it all the more powerful.

KANAL IS AN ENDURING, EMOTIONALLY EXHAUSTING REMINDER OF THE SHATTERING, INHUMANE EXPERIENCES SUFFERED DURING WARTIME.
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SPOTLIGHT SILENT RUNNINGS

Keith Waterhouse’s 1959 novel told of a young Yorkshireman working as an undertaker’s clerk. The titular character’s ambitions of an exciting life in London as a writer for a famous television comedian enmesh with his fantasies of the mythical land of Ambrosia. As postwar austerity measures faded, Britain in the 1950s was enjoying an unprecedented economic boom, and under Macmillan’s Conservatives it was true that many had “never had it so good”. Yet for many outside of London and other major centres the affluence and excitement teased from a distance of both region and class. When John Schlesinger’s film version was released in 1963, it was imbued with the realism of the British ‘New Wave’ movement that accentuated Billy’s dreary surroundings and bleak prospects. Yet his comedic flights of fancy are tinged with the realization that attempting to escape may result in the dismay of seeing one’s dreams crushed. Is it safer, perhaps, to exist in the realm of imagination?

BILLY LIAR (1963)
Dir: John Schlesinger

After his much loved animated take on Richard Adams’ Watership Down, Martin Rosen adapted the novelist’s tale of two dogs who break out of an isolated animal testing laboratory in the Lake District. Rowf and Snitter, voiced by Christopher Benjamin and John Hurt respectively, seize an opportunity to escape from the facility where they have been subjected to tortuous scientific experiments. Determined to never go back, the dogs are aided in their attempts to evade their relentless pursuers by The Tod (James Bolam), a fox experienced in countryside survival. Though Rosen described the film as an ‘adventure’, the deeper issues it touches on are impossible to ignore. Vivisection, political machinations and the media’s handling of public interest stories are all addressed as Rowf and Snitter are (wrongly) branded as Bubonic plague carrying, killer dogs. By literally giving the dogs a voice, Rosen, like Adams in the novel, employs anthropomorphism to engender empathy, and it’s done to heart-breaking effect.

THE PLAGUE DOGS (1982)
Dir: Martin Rosen

After his much loved animated take on Richard Adams’ Watership Down, Martin Rosen adapted the novelist’s tale of two dogs who break out of an isolated animal testing laboratory in the Lake District. Rowf and Snitter, voiced by Christopher Benjamin and John Hurt respectively, seize an opportunity to escape from the facility where they have been subjected to tortuous scientific experiments. Determined to never go back, the dogs are aided in their attempts to evade their relentless pursuers by The Tod (James Bolam), a fox experienced in countryside survival. Though Rosen described the film as an ‘adventure’, the deeper issues it touches on are impossible to ignore. Vivisection, political machinations and the media’s handling of public interest stories are all addressed as Rowf and Snitter are (wrongly) branded as Bubonic plague carrying, killer dogs. By literally giving the dogs a voice, Rosen, like Adams in the novel, employs anthropomorphism to engender empathy, and it’s done to heart-breaking effect.

In adapting Doris Pilkington Garimara’s Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence, director Phillip Noyce revisited a shameful chapter in Australia’s relatively short history. The practice of removing mixed race Aboriginal children from their families, under various misguided Government initiatives, led to those forcibly separated from their parents being known as the Stolen Generation. After being placed in the Moore River Native Settlement during the early 30s, Garimara’s mother, Molly, Molly’s sister Daisy and their cousin Gracie escaped, determined to rejoin their families. Following the rabbit-proof fence that stretches North to South across Western Australia, the girls walked over 1500 miles in nine weeks to reach their remote home community in Jigalong. This incredible, inspirational feat of perseverance and courage was not without cost however. Gracie was captured by those sent to track the girls down and would later die never having returned to Jigalong. Noyce’s film is a fittingly emotional representation of the girls’ experiences.

**CUBE (1997)**
**Dir:** Vicenzo Natali

Six people wake to find themselves in a room. Where they are they do not know, nor why, nor how they arrived there. Each of the cube’s six walls has a small door leading to a near-identical room but they must choose carefully for, as it is soon gruesomely apparent, most of those adjoining are booby-trapped with inventive killing devices. Evidently it appears that each of the group were chosen for particular skills and personality traits that may facilitate or hinder their escape from the cube and in the process, preconceptions (theirs and ours) of leadership, expertise, strength and weakness are exposed and explored. Indeed, the question becomes not a matter of ‘who’ of the protagonists will survive, but rather, ‘why’? Conflated within the mystery is that of the final destination. For the filmmakers the puzzle is just as crucial: after designing such a tasty premise, can they escape diluting the mystery with the exposition and explanation that such genre narrative convention demands?
The Earth’s topography has been charted and its terrain explored. For Chris McCandless, escape from the bitter and morally devoid family and social milieu of Atlanta means that he may only follow in the footsteps of Thoreau and London, discovering himself through becoming one with the natural environment. Weaving his way cross-country on several adventures, Chris eventually begins what will be his final trek, into the harsh Yukon wilderness. Yet even then he finds relics and memories of earlier adventurers. In writer-director Sean Penn’s, essentially romantic, vision of exploring frontiers both spatial and psychological, Chris’s journey may be one doomed through naivety (the locals he encounters admire his devotion but worry for his fate), yet his idealism cannot be challenged. That his final realization is one of the need to share his experiences only enforces the belief that the purest spiritual quests are those with the inherent desire to benefit all.

The film enforces the belief that the purest spiritual quests are those with the inherent desire to benefit all.

INTO THE WILD (2007)
Dir: Sean Penn

The Earth’s topography has been charted and its terrain explored. For Chris McCandless, escape from the bitter and morally devoid family and social milieu of Atlanta means that he may only follow in the footsteps of Thoreau and London, discovering himself through becoming one with the natural environment. Weaving his way cross-country on several adventures, Chris eventually begins what will be his final trek, into the harsh Yukon wilderness. Yet even then he finds relics and memories of earlier adventurers. In writer-director Sean Penn’s, essentially romantic, vision of exploring frontiers both spatial and psychological, Chris’s journey may be one doomed through naivety (the locals he encounters admire his devotion but worry for his fate), yet his idealism cannot be challenged. That his final realization is one of the need to share his experiences only enforces the belief that the purest spiritual quests are those with the inherent desire to benefit all. DB
The Mondo Gallery in Austin, Texas, showcases film inspired fantasies by some of the most cutting edge graphic artists working today. A recent recruit to their ranks is the award winning Belgian illustrator Laurent Durieux whose interpretations of modern and classic films are, quite simply, out of this world. As Laurent explained to us, though his work is frequently ahead of its time, his inspiration is firmly rooted in the past.

Much of your work is inspired by film. What attracts you to this medium?
The beauty of cinema is that it relays all sorts of emotions notwithstanding your culture, age and background. It’s a universal language, like art, which it is but probably in a more popular and broader way.

I absolutely love working on film posters and always try to tell a story in a single image, not a thousand.

How would you describe your style?
Retro-futuristic perhaps would be about the best description of my work.

Is your retro approach an unconscious decision?
It’s a very conscious decision. I love everything about the ‘30s or the ‘40s and ‘50s, the movies, the arts, the fashion design, the typography, the design, the cars, the architecture, the music ... What can I say? I’m old fashioned and loving it. That’s, for all these reasons, why I will always prefer Vertigo, Rear Window and Rope to Torn Curtain, Tippi to Family Plot.

How did your involvement with The Mondo Gallery in Texas come about?
Well my first client who introduced me to the US market was in fact Dark Hall Mansion in Los Angeles. I did the Snoopy’s Valentine’s Day prints for them and it probably caught the attention of the folks at Mondo, because some time after the DHM release they contacted me to see if I was interested to work with them and they asked if I was willing to do a poster for Brad Bird’s animation movie Iron Giant.

I had recently been made aware of Mondo at the time and had the time to check out their archive section and I was literally floored by the quality of what they were releasing. I remember thinking to myself at the time, “wow if I had to work with a publisher, it would have to be these guys” as I thought they were the best in town. And I still do think no one is matching their quality, period.
Your work has a lot of subtle, dark undercurrents (eg. the poster you did for Boris Karloff’s The Mummy). Is this deliberate?

Yes, especially when I was asked by Mondo to work on five of the eight Universal Monsters movies (The Mummy is one of them), four of which are darker in colours than anything else I did before or after (The Creatures from the Black Lagoon set aside). The theme (creature / horror movies in black and white) probably influenced me to use a darker palette, which is pretty straightforward actually.

The recent poster you did of Jaws for Mondo attracted quite a bit of interest, not least from a certain Mr Spielberg?

One day Justin Ishmael, the C.E.O of Mondo, sent us a little e-mail telling us about Steven Spielberg buying a bunch of posters. Well to be more precise, Steven Spielberg had Universal contact Mondo in his name to purchase 50 copies for him and his friends. I don’t have any more details than that, but that’s enough for me. Steven Spielberg is such a big hero of mine and to find out that he was somehow appreciative of what I had done for his movie, that meant the world to me.

What is your favourite film and what one would you most like to create a poster for?

One that holds a special place in my pantheon is definitely Blade Runner. This movie is perfection. As far as creating a poster, I would love to do Casablanca, It’s a wonderful Life, Sunset Blvd, Raiders of the Lost Ark, and so many more, I don’t really have one favourite.

If you had to choose a favourite piece of your own work, which would it be?

That’s hard, they are all my babies you know ... I love Iron Giant, The Mummy, Jaws, The Master, Buck Rogers, Things to Come, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz ... you see what I mean I can’t make up my mind on this ... Sophie’s Choice here!

Steven Spielberg is such a big hero of mine and to find out that he was somehow appreciative of what I had done for his movie, that meant the world to me.
ARCHITECTURE & FILM
ADVENTURES THROUGH THE BUILT AND FILMED ENVIRONMENTS

When Tomorrow Comes

In our continuing series CHRIS ROGERS explores the world of the future as depicted in films that looked to create immersive and believable architectural landscapes.

DEPICTION OF THE ARCHITECTURE of the future is the ultimate expression of the relationship between cinema and the built environment. Credible realisation on film required budgetary and technical restrictions to be overcome, but also an awareness of actual architectural achievement and an understanding that the distance between the present and any projected future is rather greater than commonly imagined. As such, designers began by borrowing structures from the real world.

The exterior and reception area of the euthanasia complex in Norman Jewison’s Soylen Green were filmed at the Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena, an elliptical, covered hall whose Jeanner styling dated from the 1960s but still fitted ideas of ‘futuristic’ well over a decade later. The Arena’s architect was Welton Becket, who also designed the radical, A-framed Contemporary Tower hotel for Disney World Florida in 1971. With its sloping sides and the resort’s monorail train actually passing through the lobby the hotel is an obvious influence on the buildings of the domed city in Logan’s Run, released five years later.

Interiors for the film were shot at Dallas Market Center’s now-demolished Apparel Mart, whose textured, almost rusticated wall surfaces leant a slightly more authentic dusting to the filmed environment. The Mart was created by production designer Patrick Tatopoulos. It has a lofty principal atrium, a secondary atrium running the full height of the building and a glazed executive office at the summit, all common in today’s commercial buildings.

The mechanical garage in the basement draws on present-day automatic parking systems. Accurate simulation of familiar materials, including turfed concrete, frosted and clear glass and aluminium mullions for the cladding, aids the effect.

Equally credible cities rather than individual buildings began to appear from the 1980s. The settings of films such as Aliens, Cypher Ghost in the Shell, Hauss and Minority Report were rendered far more realistic through referencing the real-life building booms that was beginning in the Middle East and Far East. But they remain generic; only a handful of science-fiction films have succeeded in creating a specific and original mood with their architecture.

Stallone’s Judge Dredd anchors itself in classic period 2000AD strips more fully than is commonly believed, with a skyline of distinctively profiled, sculpted City Blocks. Twenty five years later, Dredd made a virtue of its much lower budget by emulating the townships and suburbs of South Africa where it was filmed and the banlieue of France for its Mega-City One, a Corbusian grid of near-identical rectilinear towers.

The richly textured, multi-layered Los Angeles of Blade Runner is rightly regarded as the most thoroughly convincing futuristic ever seen in film. This is achieved less through technical facility – though that is exceptional – than through extremely close attention to real architectural history.

Extrapolating from this gave a simulated future that appeared to have sprung from a lived past and a believable present. As a result even the overtly futuristic Tyrell pyramid remains credible today. The fascinating process by which this was accomplished is explored in depth by the present author in one of a series of online pieces marking the film’s 30th anniversary.

Similarly absorbing is the portrayal of Paris in 2014 in Christian Vegelimoan’s animated Millenium. Less a projection and more an imagining of the existing city as it might have been, this also borrows heavily but carefully from the city’s buildings as well as the work of Belgian graphic novelist François Schuiten, who does much the same in his own art. It assumes Haussmanian apartment blocks crowed by winter gardens of iron and glass clustering the slopes of Montmartre, the Seine deeply canalised with its quays glazed over, and cavernous Metro stations with sweeping iron staircases onto the platforms. In contrast the headquaters of pharmaceutical corporation Avalon describes a graceful, verrigious arc over the La Defense business district, its executive office a glazed box slung beneath, like a taos-y-strong bow.

Ironically, developments over the last ten years in computer-aided design, structural analysis and materials technology have allowed construction of the kind of buildings once found only in the more fanciful science fiction films. It is now architecture that has stepped beyond the frame.

go further [web] Read more ‘Beyond the Frame’ pieces on www.thebigpicturemagazine.com
How did you first come to be involved in the Buffyverse, and in particular, the production of Buffy comics? Were you a fan of the show?

I was not. I hadn’t seen the show. We’d acquired the licence, near the end of Season 2, if I recall, and I heard the word ‘Vampire’ in the title, and, being a fan of the horror genre, jumped at it. I didn’t watch much TV at the time, or I probably would have already checked the show out for the same reason.

How did Dark Horse come to take on the Buffy comics, and what was the process that led to the groundbreaking, and trendsetting, Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season 8?

It was a long time ago that we initially took it on, but I think it was another editor expressing a passion for the show. That was what I thought at the time, but lately I heard that it happened another way. That editor left the company, which led to me taking the comics on. We did a monthly comic for a number of years, and over that time I wound up working closely with Joss. When he told me the show was ending, I said I thought we should end the comics and restart them with a new directive from him. He agreed, and we started a long conversation about how we would do that, which went through a number of iterations. Ultimately, he took me by surprise. He sent me a script one night, no warning, said, ‘We’re doing it issues for maybe it was all, I’ll write some of it, other guys from the show will write some of it, we’ll do a crossover with Fray, and oh yeah, we need Angel back.’ So it began…

From letter columns in the back of comic book issues, to interviews with media outlets both professional and amateur, you are very much engaged in maintaining a dialogue with Buffy fans. What inspires your dedication to this engagement, and what do you get out of it both personally and professionally? What do the fans teach you about the spirit of Buffy?

The readers have a certain sense of ownership over this stuff, and talking with them is informative, among other things. I meet a lot of people I really like through it, who teach me a lot about what the characters mean to people. The folks at Buffyfest are good friends, Michelle over there is
someone I call just to check in with sometimes, not even about Buffy. I really like a couple people on SoSayive, Wernian and Emmie. Emmie’s someone I don’t always agree with, she certainly doesn’t agree with me all the time, but I get a lot out of our exchanges. A woman named Maggie gives me great insight – again, we don’t always agree, but there’s a mutual level of respect that allows for a useful exchange of opinions that ultimately does more for me than it does for her.

A lot of the Browncoats are among the best audience you could ever ask for, and there’s a great population of them in Portland, so I frequently run into them at the grocery store. Then you get a lot of weird stuff. One reader will e-mail me to tell me that some other reader I’m corresponding with from a particular site constantly posts negative things about me there. I don’t know if it’s true or not, can’t take the time to check out the message board, but Jesus, guys, even these fictional characters have left high school behind. There’s someone who never fails to tell me I’m doing a terrible job, have ruined her personally, says really insulting things about how careless and thoughtless I am at my job [...] and then she comes up to me at a show; says it’s her birthday, and meeting me is the best birthday present she’s ever had. And she’s a grown woman, not a teenager.

Do you find that most fans of the Buffy comics, canonical or otherwise, came from television fandom? Yeah, certainly they largely come from TV. Think about how enormous even a cult TV audience is. Millions, right? At the peak of it so far the comic has sold 350,000 copies, and the best-selling comic today might peak around 900,000. So the untapped former TV viewer audience is a far bigger number than the entire untrained comics market audience. I would say a majority of the Buffy comics audience, or at least the audience I hear from, are not regular comics readers, or were not. Lots of anecdotal evidence suggests that, including the feedback I get from retailers about the buying habits of Buffy readers. Also anecdotal, from letters and the like, I might surmise that Buffy readers tend to be women, but I suspect that is fairly even and that the women are just writing in more. Certainly there are more female readers, proportionally, than on other comics.

What are some of the more meaningful responses you’ve received from Buffy fans? Most discouraging? It runs pretty deep. Letters from gay kids or adults that thank us for what we do. The gratitude we get for addressing the abortion storyline. The most gratifying sort of response you can get is when someone writes in and explains exactly what they got out of a comic, and how it touched them, and what they got is exactly what you were trying to do.’

© dark horse comics

‘The most gratifying sort of response you can get is when someone writes in and explains exactly what they got out of a comic, and how it touched them, and what they got is exactly what you were trying to do.’

(above) BURRFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER SEASON 9 © 2004 MARVUE COMICS

For further information about the series and news of forthcoming titles visit www.intellectbooks.com
Follow progress of all titles by liking the Fan Phenomena Book Series page on Facebook
Nicola Balkind investigates a film for which the phrase ‘based on a true story’ carries added emotional weight for its director.

Images by Brozzi Lunetta

IT IS A TRUTH universally acknowledged that a film “based on” or “inspired by” true events bears little relation to the truth.

Mark Kermode often makes reference to this. Last year, Marilla Butterley of The Independent examined their use, referring to the phrase “Based on a True Story” as an overused tagline and a promotional ploy. Earlier this year, Jillian Rayfield wrote an article in The Week entitled ‘The “based on a true story” fake-out: How 3 Oscar contenders misled audiences’, asking, “What did Zero Dark Thirty, Lincoln, and Argo embellish for the sake of a more dramatic story?” and lead a fact-check on the big films of the 2013 award season. But there is one film that defies this classification.

Reya – a film written and directed by Brozzi Lunetta, is a film inspired solely by true, and truly personal, events. Named after, and dedicated to, the director’s daughter, it is described as “a fictional story with moments of undeniable truth.”

More straightforward than a semi-autobiographical novel, this feature film in production revolves around the true story of the abduction of Reya Lunetta in more ways than one.

Reya was abducted by her mother, Camilla Ellefsen, from California after Lunetta was awarded sole custody of the child in 2002. June 2012 marked the 10 year anniversary of the abduction, the subject of a case that has been chronicled in the media.

Reya, named after, and dedicated to, the director’s daughter, is described as “a fictional story with moments of undeniable truth.”
of her abduction and disappearance. In the story of the film, the stakes are raised: a young woman has been murdered, and the detective on the case believes it to be his daughter who disappeared 20 years earlier.

If truth is stranger than fiction, why does art continue to imitate life? For Brozzi Lunetta, film is another medium that can be utilized to raise awareness about the abduction and continued missing status of his daughter. Despite coverage in the media across the US, Australia, New Zealand, India, and Sweden, numerous reported sightings, and a decade of personal searching, his daughter has not been found.

Lunetta told news sources, “It’s my way to use a fictional tale to get the story out there again, to remind people that my daughter is still missing and perhaps if we could get Camilla’s face out there it would lead to new information.”

Ultimately, he hopes that word of the film will reach his daughter directly. The film’s trailer closes with the caption, “This film is dedicated to [Reya] and is a way for her to know that her father is alive and that he is looking for her.” Camilla Lunetta has reason to believe that his ex-wife has told his daughter that her father died in a car crash in Los Angeles.

In his YouTube video call for funding to finish the film, he implies that the aforementioned “moments of undeniable truth” in the film are, in fact, quite literal. Nightmare sequences within the film feature his ex-wife Camilla, taken from home videos shot shortly before the abduction. More literal statements within the film include lines directed towards the protagonist like, “You have fallen in love with a dead woman who is not dead,” and, “When your daughter disappeared, you did everything you could to find her.”

For this father, doing everything he can is a mission which has become an endeavour in film-making and viral marketing. The wealth of Reya’s plot is inspired, if not based on, true events.

In an extract from Directory of World Cinema: Britain, David Forrest looks at arguably Britain’s greatest of all visual storytellers.

DAVID LEAN

In an extract from Directory of World Cinema: Britain, DAVID FORREST looks at arguably Britain’s greatest of all visual storytellers.

BEFORE BECOMING one of British cinema’s most important directors, David Lean served a prestigious apprenticeship in the industry, cutting his teeth as a clapper boy followed by a period as an editor – a profession in which he quickly distinguished himself. By the age of 30, Lean was working under Anthony Asquith, before assuming duties for Michael Powell. Arguably, Lean’s glittering fourteen film career, spanning almost 40 years, saw him usher his masters to become one of Britain’s most celebrated and successful filmmakers. That Lean’s experience of working under such substantial figures can be regarded as an interesting aside rather than a formative aspect of his work, is testament to the way in which he marked out his own cinematic identity with his first feature, the wartime naval drama In Which We Serve (1942). That film’s writer and star, Noel Coward, looking for an accomplished technician, offered Lean the co-directorship and their subsequent collaborations – This Happy Breed (1944), Brief Encounter (1945) and Blithe Spirit (1945) – saw Lean assume sole directorial duty.

While a far cry from the epic, exotic fare of The Bridge on the River Kwai (1957) and Lawrence of Arabia (1962), those early films established many of the tropes sustained throughout the director’s oeuvre. [10p]
THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE
Dir. Ronald Neame, 1972

JEZ CONOLLY dives below the surface of Ronald Neame’s classic disaster movie, and remembers an individual act of sacrifice driven by a collective will to survive.

IT AIN’T OVER ’til the fat lady swims: having been pushed and pulled through the inverted chambers of the upturned cruise liner Poseidon by her fellow survivors, corpulent Jewish grandmother Belle Rosen (Shelley Winters) finally gets to pull her weight. Brandishing her Women’s Swimming Association medal (gained when she was just seventeen) to prove her aquatic credentials, Mrs. Rosen reassures her devoted husband Manny (Jack Albertson) then dives into the icy waters of a submerged corridor to save the stricken Rev. Scott (Gene Hackman) and help lead the others through to the other side. It’s an act of bravery that costs Belle her life – she succumbs to a heart attack – but one that delivers the possibility of life to the remaining few. A corny, cliché-riddled, claustrophobic thrill ride it may be, but coming in the same decade as Dawson’s Field, Munich and Entebbe, the film’s theme of salvation at a terrible price, summed up by Belle’s sacrifice, resonates with the besieged Jewish milieu of the 1970s.

Read More F O U R F R A M E S online at www.thebigpicturemagazine.com

Images © 1972 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM)
WHERE THERE'S SMOKE

ALEXANDRA HELLER-NICHOLAS explores the beginnings of continuity editing in an early silent short that influenced both the language of film and popular themes in them.

DIRECTED BY Scottish-born Londoner James Williamson for the Williamson Kinematograph Company in 1901, Fire! is a short black and white silent film shot on 35mm. With movies such as Stop Thief! and The Big Swallow (made in the same year as Fire!), Williamson earned a well-deserved reputation as not only one of the most innovative and creative early film-makers, but as one of the forefathers of a film language still largely relied upon today. Fire! follows the rescue of the occupants of a domestic residency in Hove by the local fire brigade, but the simplicity of this narrative belies the technical significance of Williamson’s approach to editing in particular.

Fire! marks a crucial moment in film history as it was one of the first movies where different shots were edited together to suggest narrative chronology. Filmed at the abandoned Ivy Lodge in Hove, this movie marks a growing trend in Williamson’s work that utilised editing in this manner as he sought to create engaging action narratives, as seen in his earlier work Attack on a China Mission (1900).

It was much more than technical innovation that earned Williamson his contemporary reputation, however, and Fire! today is as significant for its deployment of disaster-as-spectacle and the crucial function of dramatic suspense in its popular success. Rescue narratives about fire were experiencing a period of extreme popularity at the time of the film’s release, not only in movies but also on stage and in magic lantern shows. The flames and smoke captured the imagination of a mass audience who by 1901 had already developed a taste for this kind of visual spectacle in other media. Film historian Charles Musser has suggested that in the United States, William Selig’s similarly themed multi-shot film Life of a Fireman preceded Williamson’s movie by some months, but it is Fire! that is most confidently presented as a complete narrative whole through basic elements of what would soon become known as continuity editing.

Consisting of five separate scenes, the film begins as a policeman discovers a building on fire. Excitedly he blows his whistle in an effort to call for attention, and rushes off screen on the right of the shot, appearing from the left of the next shot in front of the Hove Fire Brigade building. So familiar are we today with matching action from one scene to another that it is perhaps difficult to appreciate the significance of Williamson’s radical approach to editing.

Images © 1901 Williamson Kinematograph Company

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one scene to another that it is perhaps difficult to appreciate the significance of Williamson's radical approach to editing, but this precise type of matching cut would go on to become one of the staple features of continuity editing so crucial to the dominant language of the cinema as it developed over the following decades. In Fire!, the visual logic of this type of editing is complemented by the narrative cohesion of what we see unfolding before us: the policeman sees a building on fire and then rushes to the fire station to seek their assistance. There was of course a narrative justification for this technical innovation, as the move away to another location after this initial disaster-based spectacle creates suspense as we wonder: what is happening at the scene of the fire?

Horses and firemen prepare their equipment and rush away; the speed and efficiency of the procedure emphasising their professionalism and dedication to their task. Once again, a matching cut creates a sense of continuity, fluid action as a long shot shows the firemen travelling along a road, which we assume rightly to be on their journey towards the fire. The next shot jumps dramatically to a man awakening in his bed to a smoke-filled room and he rushes about hysterically, throwing water on the flames while he watches his curtains catch on fire. A policeman sees a building on fire and then rushes to the fire station to seek their assistance.

The roots of films including The Towering Inferno, City on Fire and later fire-based spectacles such as Backdraft all have their origins in Williamson’s early film.

The Towering Inferno, City on Fire and later fire-based spectacles such as Backdraft all have their origins in Williamson’s early film.

The Americas today.

Radical approach to editing, but this precise type of matching cut would go on to become one of the staple features of continuity editing so crucial to the dominant language of the cinema as it developed over the following decades. In Fire!, the visual logic of this type of editing is complemented by the narrative cohesion of what we see unfolding before us: the policeman sees a building on fire and then rushes to the fire station to seek their assistance. There was of course a narrative justification for this technical innovation, as the move away to another location after this initial disaster-based spectacle creates suspense as we wonder: what is happening at the scene of the fire?

Horses and firemen prepare their equipment and rush away; the speed and efficiency of the procedure emphasising their professionalism and dedication to their task. Once again, a matching cut creates a sense of continuity, fluid action as a long shot shows the firemen travelling along a road, which we assume rightly to be on their journey towards the fire. The next shot jumps dramatically to a man awakening in his bed to a smoke-filled room and he rushes about hysterically, throwing water on the flames while he watches his curtains catch on fire. A policeman sees a building on fire and then rushes to the fire station to seek their assistance.

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The Americas today.
ON LOCATION
THE PLACES THAT MAKE THE MOVIES

MARSEILLES

MARCELLINE BLOCK, editor of World Film Locations: Marseilles, takes us on a tour of a city whose history, physical spaces and diverse populace has proved fertile territory for generations of film-makers.

The French Connection, based on real Marseilles-New York City drug trafficking, received Oscars including Best Actor (Gene Hackman as Det. 'Popeye' Doyle), Picture (the first R rated winner) and Director. Central to its narrative is Popeye's pursuit of dapper Marseilles drug lord Charnier (Fernando Rey). The Phocaean City is a locus of violence; its coastline and landmarks – the corniche, the Vallon des Auffes – forming sun-drenched backdrops for crime: the ancient 'Panier' district is introduced in the opening sequence when Nicoli (Marcel Bozzuffi) executes a rival, point blank, in broad daylight – then casually breaks off a piece of the baguette clutched in the dead man's hands, munching on it as he leaves. Heroin smuggling plans are finalized on the iconic 16th century Château d'If, the fortress/prison in Dumas' The Count of Monte Cristo and Jean Renoir's film La Marseillaise; within sight, across the Bay of Marseille, is Notre-Dame de la Garde, the basilica known as 'The Good Mother'.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION (1971)
Dir. William Friedkin
US, 104 minutes
Starring: Gene Hackman, Fernando Rey, Roy Scheider

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ON LOCATION
THE PLACES THAT MAKE THE MOVIES

Marseilles

Three Places for the 26th/
Trois Places pour le 26 (1988)
Dir. Jacques Demy
FRA, 106 minutes
Starring: Yves Montand,
Mathilda May, Patrick Fierry

Total Chaos/
Total Khéops (2002)
Dir. Olaf de Fleur Johannesson
FRA, 90 minutes
Starring: Richard Bohringer,
Marie Trintignant, Daniel Duval

The Moon in the Gutter/la lune Dans le caniveau (1983)
Dir. Baltasar Kormákur
FRA, 137 minutes
Starring: Gérard Depardieu,
Victoria Abril

THE MOON IN THE GUTTER/LA LUNE DANS LE CANIVEAU (1983)
Dir. Baltasar Kormákur
FRA, 137 minutes
Starring: Gérard Depardieu,
Nastassja Kinski, Victoria Abril

THE MOON IN THE GUTTER/la lune DANS LE CANIVEAU (1983)
Dir. Baltasar Kormákur
FRA, 137 minutes
Starring: Gérard Depardieu,
Nastassja Kinski, Victoria Abril

Dir. Jacques Demy
FRA, 106 minutes
Starring: Yves Montand,
Mathilda May, Patrick Fierry

Total Chaos is adapted from Marseillais author
Jean-Claude Izzo's Marseilles Trilogy novels
The film is infused with the socio-cultural
atmosphere of The Phocaean City: the southern
accent (du 'Midi'); bouillabaisse and pastis,
staples of Provençal cuisine, and crime (mafia
factions, corruption, violence). As Detective
Fabio Montale (Richard Bohringer) investigates
the assassination of his childhood friend Manu,
recently released from Marseilles' Baumettes
prison, he traverses the city, from its ancient
heart to the sun-drenched Calanques on the
coast. Showcasing Provence's capital, Total
Chaos is a quintessentially Marseillais film,
albeit far removed from Marcel Pagnol's Marius,
Fanny, and César (1931-36) – the original, iconic
Marseilles trilogy (remade on Broadway as
Fanny, subsequently made into the eponymous
1961 film). Yet Total Chaos pays homage to
Pagnol: for example, the character of Honorine,
Montale's elderly neighbour, is a reference to
Pagnol's trilogy, in which Fanny's mother is
named Honorine.

Three Places for the 26th unites two legends of
French cinema, Yves Montand and Jacques
Demy. Demy's last feature film is a musical
comedy paying tribute to Marseilles and its
(not quite) native son, Italian-born/Marseilles-
bred Montand, who – playing himself in this
otherwise fictionalized narrative – returns
to his childhood city to star in his musical
autobiography, 'Montand Remembers'. This
musical-within-a-musical, staged at the
Marseilles Opéra, depicts Montand's trajectory
to stardom from early days in Marseilles'
venerated music-hall scene. Marseilles is the
backdrop for splashy, choreographed routines
when the city is recreated onstage as well as in
the film's opening sequence, a song-and-dance
extravaganza held on the ornate stairway of
Saint-Charles station, transforming it into
an outdoor theatrical space. By revisiting his
stomping grounds, Montand – haunted by
memories of a lost love – attempts to recuperate
what he left behind in Marseilles: the buddy who
remained a dockworker; the girl who got away.

The Moon in the Gutter is Jean-Jacques Beineix's
adaptation of David Goodis' noir novel,
transposing the book's Philadelphia setting
to the gritty docks of Marseilles, described in
voice-over at the start of the film as "le port
du nullepart"/"the port of nowhere". Stevedore
Gérard Delmas (Gérard Depardieu) makes a
nightly pilgrimage, once the moon has risen,
to the street near the docks where his sister
Catherine was raped, after which she slit her
own throat, her blood indelibly staining the
street along the gutter where she perished.
Interspersed with daytime scenes at the shipyard
where Gérard works, most of the narrative
unfolds during his nocturnal wanderings
as he encounters bizarre characters and
situations while searching for his sister's rapist.
Representing Marseilles as a surreal nightmare-
scape where reality and fantasy intersect, The
Moon in the Gutter's striking visuals – emblematic
of Beineix's Cinema du Look aesthetic – won
the César for production design.

To go further
Buy World Film Locations: Marseilles from Amazon and www.intellectbooks.com
It is not a coincidence that the glorious golden ticket needed to board the Polar Express run by Tom Hanks’s magical train conductor is almost identical to the glorious golden ticket needed to enter the ‘non-pollutionary, anti-institutionary, pro-confectionery factory of fun’ run by Gene Wilder’s Willy Wonka. In the 23 years between Mel Stuart’s Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory and Robert Zemeckis’s The Polar Express (2004), the golden ticket became Hollywood’s ultimate expression of that chance we all want, but so few of us ever get, to realize our greatest ambitions. As Grandpa Joe (Jack Albertson) sings: ‘I never thought my life could be / Anything but catastrophe / But suddenly I begin to see / A bit of good luck for me / ’Cause I’ve got a golden ticket!’

Children’s stories frequently suggest that, aside from being unsavoury, greed and self-promotion generally go unrewarded. But the golden ticket tells us otherwise: Augustus Gloop (Michael Bollner) gets his because he is a glutton and Verusca Salt (Julie Dawn Cole) gets hers because she is spoiled and her parents are wealthy. Had we not read the book, or seen the trailer, there are times during Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory when we would genuinely believe that Charlie Bucket (Peter Ostrum) will never open a Wonka Bar to find that special prize. When he does, in that thrilling moment when he feels himself (and, by extension, we imagine ourselves) catapulted from ordinary to extraordinary, the film delivers a lesson: life is often better for the rich, and the privileged frequently have a monopoly on opportunity, but just occasionally that big break can come to someone like us.

The ticket’s colour is crucial. Gold, of course, connotes wealth and therefore happiness, and – whether we dream of wedding rings or Oscars or Olympic gold medals – it is so often the colour that accompanies achievement. Roald Dahl understood this when he wrote Charlie & the Chocolate Factory and he understood it when he wrote the screenplay for this film adaptation. In Charlie’s golden ticket, he created the perfect passport to our dreams.
WORLD FILM LOCATIONS EXPLORING THE CITY ONSCREEN

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Chungking Express (Wong Kar-Wai, 1994)
When movie characters find themselves in the tightest of elevated spots often the only logical course of action left is also the craziest. Trapped and facing capture or certain death, but with a body of water far below them, all these unfortunates can do is jump and hope for the best.

From a technical viewpoint, this vertigo inducing act of desperation is constructed by employing stuntmen, dummies or CGI and combining them with camera-trickery, editing and dramatic accompanying music.

In *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (George Roy Hill, 1969), the titular Wild West outlaws find themselves trapped on a cliff high above a river with a posse of gunmen closing in. Butch (Paul Newman) convinces the Sundance Kid (Robert Redford), a non-swimmer, to jump for their lives with the line 'are you crazy? The fall will probably kill you anyway'. An old fashioned act of daring death stunt-work - the kind Hollywood has always excelled at - sees Butch and Sundance evade their pursuers for one more day.

For Harrison Ford’s Dr Richard Kimble in Andrew Davis’ *The Fugitive* (1993), a similar situation to Butch and Sundance’s confronts him. Reaching the end of a drainage tunnel, Kimble is stuck with a dam below and deputy U.S. Marshall Samuel Gerard (Tommy Lee Jones) to his rear. To the deputy’s astonishment, Kimble, in the shape of a less than convincing dummy, plunges headlong into the cascading waters, somehow cheating death in the process. Of course, the narrative Gods demand that such a leap of faith has a positive outcome, and the opening sequence of fantasy epic *Solomon Kane* (Michael J. Bassett, 2009) ties an escape-jump into its tale of redemption. By jumping through the stained glass window of a cliff-top fortress to escape the Devil’s Reaper, an act that sends him hurting, with the help of CGI, down into the raging ocean below, merciless privateer Kane (James Purefoy) simultaneously begins a spiritual ascension towards saving his soul. Foolhardy or heroic, the escape-jump is a last resort, a death-defying throw of the dice where the stacked-against odds are always overturned to favour the brave.

*All Fall Down*  

NEIL MITCHELL takes a leap into the unknown to examine the most dramatic of escape routes onscreen.
What Historical event from 1922 inspired Universal Pictures to make The Mummy 10 years later? The winning entry chosen at random will win a limited edition poster of ‘The Mummy’ by master artist Laurent Durieux.

Email answers to: gabriel@intellectbooks.com

Deadline for entries: 20 July, 2013
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A roundup of all the films featured...

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Sean Penn

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