

# BOOKSHELF

by George L. George

## Styles of National Cinemas

The distinctive characteristics of each country's style of filmmaking is explored in many recent books. In **Spaghetti Westerns**, Christopher Frayling rehabilitates the usually derided cowboy epics filmed in Italy and other European lands. In this detailed critical survey some 400 such films are examined and defined as idiosyncratic perceptions of American culture and lifestyle (Routledge & Keegan Paul \$40/20).

The effect of British anti-establishment activities in the arts - mainly cinema, television and drama - that shook up Britain during the 1945-60 Cold War years, is perceptively discussed by Robert Hewison in **In Anger**. It stresses artists' political and esthetic opposition to the status quo and the significant cultural shift it generated (Oxford U. Press \$19.95).

Filmmaking in Australia is surveyed in no less than three new volumes.

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## Great Ideas...

(cont. from p. 37)

lem." Old CFI hands view these statements with a jaundiced eye, since the federal government has been promising to establish a "rational funding policy" for the CFI since the days when Diefenbaker first became Prime Minister.

Starting with the premise that Canada needs a strong and effectual national film institute if we are to take our films and filmmakers seriously and promote ourselves nationally and around the world, we must seriously deal with the question of the future of our beleaguered Institute. As has been said before, and to paraphrase Voltaire once again, if the CFI didn't exist we would have to invent it. So why not do it with style and flair and enough funding to allow its workers to use their brains rather than their wits? Harcourt: "It seems to me that the CFI should be doing exactly what it is doing, but with far more public support and with funds to create a much higher profile."

Frederik Manter recently proposed a scheme to merge the CFI with the NFB, which was not successful - fortunately. The thought of the Institute swallowed up by an already cumbersome bureaucratic structure is not an attractive prospect. But as Manter understood when he made the proposal, if the CFI were part of a government organization it would then get the increase in funds that it would need to operate successfully. (When the archival collection was handed over to the Public Archives, it was immediately given a sizeable budget for its preservation and additions - much greater than any the CFI had ever received.)

Morris feels that the only answer lies in breaking the Institute out of its carefully preserved and protected semi-

Edited by Scott Murray, **The New Australian Cinema** examines the themes that dominate 'down under' production, separating those that reflect national concerns from those that strive for international recognition (NY Zoetrope, 31 E. 12 St., NYC 10003; \$19.95).

The saga of the Australian film is unfolded by Eric Reade in **History and Heartburn**, a well-documented survey that reveals the scope and vitality of the local scene (Fairleigh Dickinson U. Press \$40). Compiled by Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper, **Australian Film 1900-1977** is a comprehensive guide to some 500 features displaying the resourcefulness of domestic filmmakers and describing historic aspects of production (Oxford U. Press \$98).

In **The Phenomenon of the Soviet Cinema**, Yuri Vorontsov and Igor Rachuk offer an engrossing view of the film industry in the context of the country's overall progress and historic development (Imported Publications, 320 W. Ohio St., Chicago, IL 60610; \$9.75).

Mira and Anthony J. Liehm, in **The Most Important Art**, survey film production in the USSR and seven East European People's Democracies since

private mold, and making it "quasi-governmental." Not a new idea, it was originally suggested in a 1972 proposal entitled "Cinema Canada" which he co-authored: "I think that the solution that would work, which we proposed then is to make this Film Institute "thing" one of the National Museums. The National Museums Act has provisions for the additions of new museums so that it would be a very simple procedure to add a Canadian film museum... that would be funded, at a certain arm's length, by the government... and then would carry out all the functions that a national museum/gallery would carry out: conservation, education, promotion and exhibition."

It seems the best idea presented so far. At the same time someone should be appointed as executive director of the new "national gallery" with the kind of dynamism and political adroitness needed to "develop an awareness of one's own culture" in the midst of the tidal wave enveloping us from the south. At the time of writing rumours are starting to circulate that the entire Institute, far from being revitalized, might actually be shut down before the end of the year. If this is allowed to happen, it will be one more crack in the already flimsy dike that surrounds this nebulous thing called Canadian culture.

## Footnotes

1. From the 1935 "Memorandum of Agreement" that formed the National Film Society.
2. Butler, Ivan, *To Encourage the Art of Film: the Story of the BFI*, Robert Hale and Co., 1971.
3. Figures from the CFI "Survey of total income from all sources, 1970 through 1981."
4. Ibid. ●

1945. This well-documented, in depth assessment aptly balances artistic growth against the politico-economic realities of the period (U. of California Press \$10.95).

The interaction between two cultures and its effect on cinema and literature is studied in **Images of the Mexican American in Film and Fiction** by historian Arthur G. Pettit. A scholarly volume, it focuses on the stereotyped Mexicans, usually pictured in Anglo movies and books (Texas A&M U. Press \$19.50/9.95).

In **The American Newsreel 1911-1967**, Raymond Fielding unfolds the history of what was once a staple of theatrical programming. Tracing the genre to its European origins, Fielding credits cameramen's initiative as a source of its early success (U. of Oklahoma Press \$16.95/7.95).

## Films In Print

From the University of Wisconsin, come three new titles in their excellent series of screenplays of Warner Bros. film classics of the 1930-50 period: **The Public Enemy** (Henry Cohen, ed.), **Yankee Doodle Dandy** (Patrick McGilligan, ed.), and **Little Caesar** (Gerald Peary, ed.). Each illustrated volume contains an annotated script, critical essays and other relevant material (\$15/5.95 ea.).

Reflecting Ingmar Bergman's view of violence as an unavoidable component of our existence, **From the Life of Marionettes** is a disturbing script by the Swedish director involving complex action on several levels of time (Pantheon \$8.95/2.95).

The script of singer/composer Paul Simon's highly personal film, **One-Trick Pony**, reflects the crises that beset the performer's career and life, weaving narrative and music into a moving document about painful family stresses deepened by professional uncertainties (Knopf \$8.95).

## Genres and Techniques

In **The Warner Brothers Cartoons**, Will Friedwald and Jerry Beck describe entertainingly some 850 shorts in the "Looney Tunes" and "Merrie Melodies" series, with complete filmographies, credits and synopses of these popular cartoons (Scarecrow \$15).

The history of the Halas & Batchelor Animation Studio is narrated by Roger Manvell in **Art and Animation**, tracing the 40-year growth of these pioneers of the craft, their innovative creativity and bold techniques (Hastings House \$26.50).

Adapted from Faith Hubley's enchanting animated movie and enhanced by Elizabeth Swados' evocative poetry, **Skydance** is a joyous and colorful celebration of life on imaginary cosmic planets (Harper & Row \$8.95).

In **Hollywood Genres** by Thomas Schatz, the distinctive qualities of films of the 1930-60 era are expertly synthesized in their historic, social and technical aspects, and integrated into a perceptive study of growth of the various genres that marked Hollywood's "classical period" (Temple U. Press \$19.95).

A thoughtful and well-researched study by Peter Roffman and Jim Purdy, **The Hollywood Social Problem Films** evaluates the impact on society of movies dealing with "madness, despair and politics from the Depression to the Fifties," pointing to the individual as the victim of life's oppressive realities (U. of Indiana Press \$25/12.95).

The dark appeal of horror films to man's lower instincts is upheld and justified in **Danse Macabre**, a shrewd commentary on the tenuousness of life threatened by nuclear annihilation, penned by Steven King, author of many superchillers turned into films (St. Martin's \$20).

In **A Reference Guide to the American Film Noir**, some 250 films representative of the genre, produced between 1940 and 1958, are selected by Robert Ottoson for a knowledgeable analysis of their thematic and visual patterns, and descriptive filmography (Scarecrow \$15).

The specialized techniques used in the shooting of athletic events of every type is explored in detail in **Filming Sports**, a comprehensive guide published by Eastman Kodak. Thirteen genres of games and competitions - football, baseball, soccer, swimming, etc. - are thoroughly discussed, diagrammed and illustrated in this attractive volume (\$19.95).

Robert W. Stedman's **The Serials** traces the development, from early 1900s movies to radio and eventually to television, of "suspense and drama on the installment plan" (U. of Oklahoma Press \$17.50/9.95). ●



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